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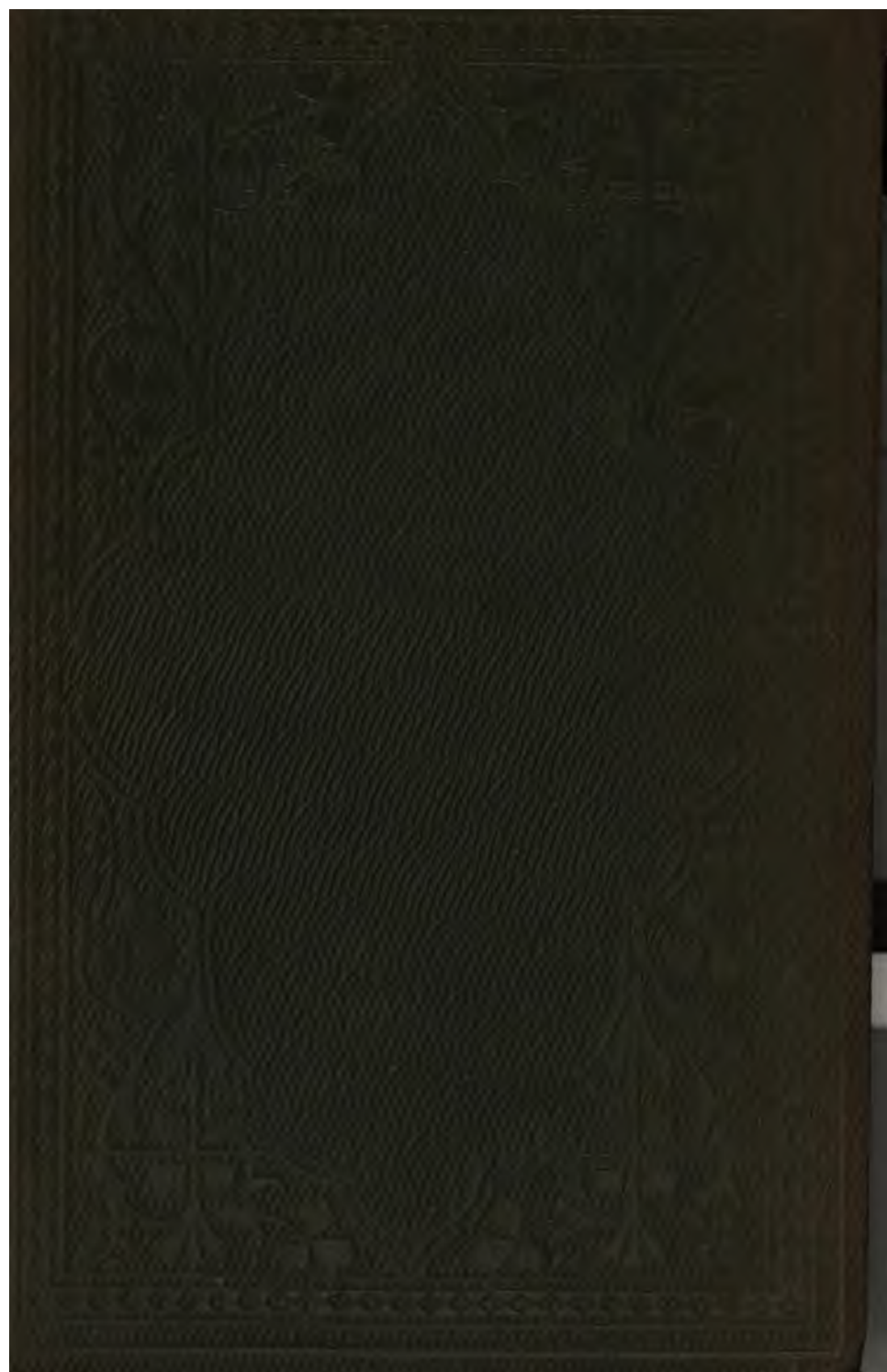
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THE LITTLE BEAUTY.

BY

MRS GREY,

AUTHOR OF

"THE GAMBLER'S WIFE," "COUSIN HARRY,"

&c. &c.

"What is beauty? Not the show
Of shapely limbs and features. No,
These are but flowers,
That have their dated hours,
To breathe their momentary sweets, then go.
'T is the stainless soul within
That outshines the fairest skin."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

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THE LITTLE BEAUTY.

CHAPTER I.

"So our blacksmith's fine lady has brought him a girl!" said a village gossip to her neighbour, an elderly matron, who was in the act of passing through the little garden which led to her adjoining cottage.

"Yes, Mrs Higgins," the woman consequentially replied, "and a more beautifuller babby I never dressed."

"And how fares that set-up thing, Mistress Miller? Did she bear up pretty bravely, or did she suppose that the like of her ought to be spared all labour and sorrow?" Mrs Higgins continued, with a malicious grin.

"She fared much the same as all Eve's daughters," returned the village midwife with increased pomposity; "and I makes it a law, you know, neighbour, never to tell tales out of school about my patients."

"No one wants you to tell tales, Mother Jenks; but, like a good woman, just tell me what does Frank Miller say to his daughter? I have heard that he was all for a lad."

"Oh, lack-a-day!" the good woman exclaimed, really too uncomfortably brimful of the subject to be able to resist a little information oozing out, "Frank Miller was indeed in a pretty way when he heard it was a girl. 'A girl!' he shouted, with—lor me! such an oath, 'a troublesome baggage, just come into the world to be made into a lazy, useless piece of trumpery; no good will ever come of a girl to me—a boy might have been made something of—a girl never!' He did not even look at the pretty babby, but strode away, much as he was wanted, for his wife has been precious bad since, I can tell you, and he did not come back for hours."

"Precious bad, was she?" eagerly in-

quired Mrs Higgins. "What was the matter? Now there's a good woman, tell us all about it?"

But Mrs Jenks's momentary *épanchement* was over. She pursed up her mouth, and in a dignified manner said :

"I have nothing more to tell, neighbour, so good-night. I have had a good long time of it, that I *can* tell you, and am dead beat ; so a cup of tea and to bed."

"Yes, and a drop of something in it," muttered Mrs Higgins, as she reëntered her kitchen, not at all satisfied with the result of her late gossip.

"Stupid old soul !" she exclaimed ; "but I'll step in again after the black bottle has done its work ; her tongue always runs the freer after a good pull at it, and if I cannot get anything out of her, I'll be in at the Millers', and see all about it myself before night ; that is to say, if I can get this plaguy ironing done. Heigho ! it's a queer business, this stupid marriage of handsome Frank Miller's with that grand nurse, who always looked as much a lady as the Marchioness herself, and far more proud like. Poor Frank ! and do not I pity him ? No

wonder he was vexed it was a girl, poor fellow ! He was thinking, I warrant, of the bad bargain he had made in the mother, who certainly is fit for nothing but to sit in the fine nursery at the Court, and to be waited upon by understrappers of all kinds and sorts ; dressing up young lords and ladies in purple and fine linen, as the Bible says. Well, I must just bustle on and get finished ; I am wild to see this young lady blacksmith, decked out in all the fid-fads and cast-off finery of the top nobbs of yonder grand house."

Frank Miller was, as we have heard, in reality the village blacksmith, although he did not nominally work at the forge ; a good thriving trade it had always been at Brooklands, the forge standing close to one of the gates of Lyle Court, with its stables full of horses of every description.

Miller had been head groom to the Marquis of Glenmore for many years, and had saved a good sum of money.

People wondered at his going into business of such a sort, but Frank's father had been a thriving blacksmith before him ; he had been bred up in the forge, had always a fancy for

the craft, and having a firm will of his own, in spite of the entreaties, and even tears and threats of his affianced bride, he determined to secure the business as soon as an opportunity offered.

His intended wife was then head nurse of the Lyle family, having worked her way to the top of the tree, from being at first only a nursery girl, by fortunate and unforeseen circumstances. The young heir had been dangerously ill with scarlet fever; his nurse took the complaint; the contagion spread through the nursery; only Ellen, the under-nursery-maid, escaped it, and into her young hands did the task devolve of nursing the precious little lord, then the only child. Well did she perform this office, and when it was all over, and the child restored to health, the doctor gave the fullest meed of praise to Ellen for her skill and tender care.

Such attention and judicious management he had never before seen equalled.

"Indeed, my Lady," he added, "you need not go further to find a nurse; far and wide, it would be impossible to meet with a better or cleverer than this young woman."

So Nelly Rose, at a wonderfully early age

for such an important post, became head and chief of the Lyle nursery. And soon more charges were added to swell her dignity and responsibility. Three little ladies successively made their appearance, and then another son was born; the importance of the head nurse increasing with every addition to the nursery party.

Who so great a personage in the house as Mrs Rose?

Certainly, not the Marchioness—a gentle, unpretending woman, delicate in health, and unostentatious in habits—dotingly fond of her children, and only too glad to overwhelm with indulgence and kindness one who certainly devoted herself to the well-being of her little darlings.

So Mrs Rose was spoilt to her heart's content. But notwithstanding the daily increasing pride and self-conceit of this woman, she remained constant to her first love, and no doubt would have continued so, even had she not been quite aware that he was also working up his way, knowing well what he was about, and making a heavy purse against the day when he should be enabled to set up in business as a blacksmith (that was the extent

of his ambition), and marry his love, the pretty Ellen Rose. Frank Miller had always been considered a miracle of perfection by the female servants at the Court; and there was really much in his face and figure deserving admiration; a handsomer man was rarely to be seen.

There is without doubt "a tide in the affairs of men." Tom Giles, the blacksmith, at last died; Frank Miller bought the concern, house, garden, and all; and, as a matter of course, claimed the hand of his long promised wife.

The Marquis of Glenmore, after a very long illness in London, was brought down to Lyle Court, to be buried in the tomb of his ancestors, his successor being then quite a youth, and a complete break-up at the Court ensued.

The Marchioness, truly mourning for her lord, could not endure the idea of remaining at a place where she had lived so many years of happiness with one whom she truly loved, and therefore removed with all her family to another place, in a county not far distant from London.

The whole establishment left the Court, which was shut up; the housekeeper, and

attendants sufficient to keep it in order, alone remaining, and there appeared little probability of the old place being occupied again for many a long day.

It was really a very hard struggle to Mrs Rose to make up her mind to give up her place ; to leave the beautiful youngest child, and all the luxury and indulgences which habit had made second nature to her. But Frank Miller was peremptory ; indeed he hinted that if she made any further hesitation, he was ready to be off the bargain at once. If she would not have him, he knew who would.

And the vision of a much younger, and in every way more suitable, partner for this lover of hers—of whom she had for some time felt many a sickly qualm of jealousy—arose before her jaundiced eye ; yes, she must make no more ado, she saw plainly ; the deed must be done ; so, with many tears, and the sincerest sorrow, she was obliged to resign her beautiful nursling to a new attendant, towards whom she felt many a jealous grudge, and then she married Frank Miller. Poor Frank ! far better for you had it been Anne Coles, the second housemaid, that hard-working, industrious girl,

who would indeed have been a suitable helpmate for you—considering her fate as your wife indeed a prize in life's lottery—and have looked upon the forge as a scene of glory, not a disgrace, an eye-sore!

The following is a sketch of the conversation which, however, brought the matter to a final conclusion :—

“ With all the money you have saved, and my few pounds in the bank, to say nothing of the fifty pounds a year I am to have till the day of my death,—an annuity from the late Marquis,—I am sure, Frank, we could go into some more genteel line than that dreadful blacksmith's business; and, oh dear! to live here after they have all gone, will be enough to break my heart. How I do hate the thoughts of seeing you always with a black face and dirty hands from morning till night, I, who have been used to such different things.”

Frank's eyes scanned with a peculiar expression the person of his affianced bride, now no longer in her “*première jeunesse*,” but just at the ripe age of forty, her still very pretty, though faded, face spoilt by a cross, supercilious expression, and her dress so like that of a lady, her hands looking as if they

had never done anything approaching to a day's work; in short, a degree of refinement pervaded her whole appearance, which sent a feeling of dismay to his mind. And then, unfortunately, the recollection of buxom Anne Coles flashed across his fancy, with her fresh complexion, her twenty-five summers, her smiling good-humoured, though not handsome, face, and her strength and will to clean a house down in no time.

"Why, yes, Nelly," he replied, with grave determination, "perhaps you had better think well of it before you take the leap, for although it will not be necessary for me to have a black face and hands from morning till night, after all, may be, I am not the best man for you; it will be rather another thing for you, indeed, to be the wife, as you say, of such as I—Frank Miller, the smith—to what you have been used to up yonder—and so before you give up your place, turn it well over in your mind, and do not think I shall owe you a grudge for it."

Mrs Nelly, at these words, burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"And is this what it has come to, after eighteen long years of patient waiting?—owe

me a grudge for it?—no, you would thank me instead. Oh, Frank! and is it really come to this? But I know how it is; you are a faithless, hard-hearted monster; don't think I'm blind or deaf; I've seen and heard plenty; yes," she continued, her sobs and tears increasing, to the dismay of her listener, who really was very soft-hearted at the sight of a woman's tears; "yes, sir, go and marry that coarse-looking, vulgar Anne Coles, and break the heart of one who has been always true to you."

Frank had loved the pretty Nelly very sincerely, and it was only of late that he had begun to think she had grown above him, and that his good plain sense had pointed out that a wife of less pretension was more fitted for his grade of life. Perhaps he thought with Ovid, that "if you want to marry suitably, marry your equal." Still he had no intention of playing false to his old love, and now her tears and genuine grief softened his heart again towards her, and not a little flattered his self-love.

Nothing a man loves so dearly, let him be wise or let him be simple, as feeling himself the object of a woman's entire devotion,

and how few can withstand the tears which are shed *alone for him* ! Much is said about the vanity of the weaker sex ; in our opinion it is quite equalled by that of man—particularly where women are concerned. The strongest become weak in their hands, if the right chord is only judiciously touched. Do we not daily hear and see instances of those we had imagined Samsons in strength of mind, succumbing without the slightest resistance to the wiles of a Delilah ? and our Samson was vanquished, strong man as he was ; whether for weal or woe, he must abide by his love, and only think of her as the Nelly of old, not as the stately Mrs Rose, who had hardly vouchsafed a look his way, latterly, if she chanced to meet him whilst surrounded by grand company ; little imagining, when stung to the quick by her apparent coldness, that, with all her airs and graces, he always held the warmest place in her vain heart.

Never for a moment had she really wavered. Though many were the high-flown visions of her married life, of genteel competency and ease, some occupation not materially interfering with her acquired ideas of what was the right thing, under every circumstance Frank

Miller's wife she was to be, and to give him up, even red hot from the forge, oh, that would never do !

So no more insinuations against his *profession*, for thus she qualified the rough trade of her intended ; at any rate, she could write to her absent friends, and designate her husband a veterinary surgeon ; and perhaps it might come to that at last.

CHAPTER II.

THE wedding was to take place before the family left the Court.

The future abode of the bride was well plenished by the Marchioness, who thought she could not do enough for a nurse who had served her so long and faithfully. Well would it have been for the future, if the amiable lady had been less lavish, or more judicious, in the choice of her numerous gifts, which, low be it spoken, our Frank designated as "useless trumpery."

"Well, I suppose it cannot be helped," he mentally ejaculated with a groan-like sigh, a few days before the wedding, when he looked

around him, after the departure of his Nelly, who had been spending some hours at the cottage, unpacking the numerous boxes which had been brought from the Court—hoards of years—such a heterogeneous collection of treasures! “But don’t I feel, for all the world, like a bull in a china shop?” he continued, as he moved, as cautiously as he could, his brawny figure across the small room, so scattered with brittle articles. “What in the world can be the use of this, I wonder?” as he picked up from the floor, and held disdainfully between his fingers, a scented *sachet*, a present from some pretty lady to the favoured nurse. “Faugh! how it smells; worse than a pole cat! A pretty present for a blacksmith’s wife; far better a gridiron, or a good bottle spit, which, by the by, I must just go and buy. Heigho! I wonder whether she will know how to use it when it is here? Precious bad dinners I expect I shall have!”

The marriage, however, came off at last, and a gay concern it was.

The young Marquis gave away the bride, and the little ladies officiated as bridesmaids.

Frank Miller hated the parade of the business, and looked sulky and out of his element; but

he could not help himself, and thanked his stars this would be the last of all such folly and nonsense.

The bride and bridegroom went off for a week's holiday, and also that Frank Miller might do a little necessary business at a neighbouring town; when they returned, the Court was deserted, and the hitherto pleasant home of the Glenmore family no longer resounded with the cheerful sound of a large establishment.

Marriage is a desperate thing. The frogs in Esop's fable were extremely wise. They had a great mind to some water, but they would not leap into the well, because they could not leap out again.

Well for Frank Miller had he studied this wholesome adage.

Never was there so complete a case of "paired, not matched." A good and kind husband Frank Miller might have made from the very first, had he married a wife in any way suitable to him; but he found out, as he had before suspected, that he had made a direful blunder. And Mrs Miller! what thought she of the change from the Court to the smithy?

She was, poor woman, unfeignedly miserable; years of luxury, of unbounded ease and indulgence, had completely incapacitated her for anything like work or common fare.

The nursery dinners and suppers had ever created more ado than any of the other various tables in the establishment of Lyle Court.

“That worrying Mrs Rose is so particular and fussy; mind, Eliza, that sweet pastry and some of that *vol au vent* are kept for the nursery. My Lady told me this morning that Mrs Rose had been complaining that her meals are sent up shockingly neglected; she makes more row about her eating than even the governesses in the school-room; and that’s saying a good deal.”

Thus spoke the housekeeper.

“Susan, for gracious sake! take care how you iron those collars and sleeves; a fine fuss that set-up Madam in the nursery made last week about her finery. She declares her beautiful *Walanciennes* was all torn. I wonder how it will be after the first getting up in the back kitchen of the blacksmith’s cottage?”

Thus spoke the head laundry-maid, and such-like exclamations were resounding constantly through the whole establishment.

Madam Nurse lorded it over all. No one ever dared to dispute her ascendancy. This is no uncommon case. No servant ever gains such complete sway over the mind of her employer as the nurse—and no wonder ! Has she not in her hands the care, the welfare, nay, often the lives of our treasures—our dearest ones for the time being wholly in her keeping ? And the nurse, with a degree of self-devotion and cheerfulness which has always in us excited no small surprise as well as admiration, gives up her whole time, her health, and strength to her nurslings—regardless of sleepless nights and days of never-ceasing fatigue—self-sacrificing indeed is the devotion of a really good nurse—wonderful to witness. Then is it not excusable that we load these valuable creatures with indulgences ? Could we refrain from doing likewise ? Nevertheless, that the perfect nurse of a nobleman's family could ever be likely to make a perfect wife to a blacksmith, is equally anomalous.

Although Venus wedded with Vulcan, that is no precedent for a happy marriage. It was not the best-assorted union ; and though our Vulcan's bride did not err in the same manner as the beautiful heathen goddess—she was

quite as unequally yoked to her stalwart mate. •

It is easy to imagine the consequences of this *mésalliance*. Mrs Miller was wholly unfit for the plain, humble life her husband would fain have had her lead. After miserable wrangling and utter discomfort, a woman of the village was hired to do the work of the cottage, and Mrs Miller, growing thinner and paler every day, had no comfort left but to sit alone in her smart parlour when her husband was out of the way, to arrange and reârrange the pretty things on the round table, gaze with blinding tears upon many little pictures and sketches of her dear children, as she called them, particularly upon one—the portrait of her darling pet, the little Lord Victor.

“And to have left them all—and for what?” she would sob forth; “to marry a man who would like me to be a drudge, who cares not a straw for me; perhaps,” she would add despondingly, “no wonder; I am not fit for him; he had better have married Anne Coles.”

Her vocation was ended, and she could turn to no other. And so time passed heavily away; but there came a change. There was the prospect of an event which at once brightened

the aspect of all things to the *ci-devant* head nurse.

She was about to become a mother. Oh, what joy! another baby to nurse, and her very own! And then she thought, could she ever love a child better than those she had left? She scarcely imagined that possible.

However, for the first time since she had left the Court, she felt some interest in life. It would be a pleasant amusement and occupation to prepare for the arrival of the expected babe—and many were the splendid hoards she had laid up for such an emergency. Better had they been consigned to the flames than to Ellen Rose's boxes!

Those costly cambrics, laces, and embroideries, hardly a day the worse for wearing, what had they to do in a blacksmith's cottage? And the smart *bassinette*, with its muslin draperies, how unfit a couch for honest, rough Frank Miller's child! Would not all this vanity and false pretension be laying the foundation-stone to a bringing-up of folly which could not possibly lead to good?

With many a groan the blacksmith watched the operations of his wife. Poor man! the idea of becoming a father was mingled with

many troubled feelings. He did not want for sound good sense, and he had already learnt a hard lesson during the period of his married life. His wife was essentially a very silly woman, there was no mistake in that ; her life of luxury had implanted faults in her character which in a rougher life might not have sprung up.

“How would she bring up his child?”

This was the question.

“Well,” he soliloquized, “if it is a lad, it will do, I’ll see after him ; but the Lord preserve us from a girl.”

“Where is your missus?” Frank angrily inquired of the servant-girl one evening on coming into the house, tired and hungry, and finding the fire low, and no signs of supper.

“Oh, missus is in the parlour, and told me not to come in there plaguing her ; she is about her babby-clothes,” the girl added, significantly, “and such little loves they be !”

Frank Miller pushed open the door, and stood darkly contemplating the scene. His wife sat at a little table, upon which the most conspicuous object was a tiny infant’s cap, thickly trimmed with lace, while Mrs Miller was ruthlessly snipping up yards of narrow

ribbon into lengths of about two inches long. Most useless and destructive did this operation appear to the uninitiated eyes of the disgusted blacksmith. His ire waxed hot, he had been put out with something which had gone wrong at the forge, and was all ready for an explosion.

“What the devil are you about, missus, sitting there losing your time, and making all that waste with that trumpery? Have you nothing better to do with your fingers than that there cutting up of goods?”

“You are only showing your ignorance, Mr Miller. I am not wasting trumpery, as you call it; those bits of ribbon are to trim this cap.”

“That cap, and pray who is that tomfoolery meant for? Not for my child, Nelly Miller; no child of mine shall be made such a Merry Andrew of. No,” he continued, his wrath becoming more and more vehement as he caught sight of the pretty *bassinette*, with its pink-lined curtains, peeping from beneath the cover which had been thrown over it—“I’ll just tell you what. I shall go to-morrow and buy a wicker cradle, and ask Mrs Evans at the Court for a suit of baby-clothes such as are given to the people herabouts; and then, if

you do not choose to make them, I'll find some one who will; I must put an end to all this cursed folly and nonsense."

And with his large hands, Frank Miller gathered up all the delicate little articles scattered around upon the tables and chairs, and recklessly threw them all into the—fortunately—fireless grate.

Oh, the commotion which ensued!

Poor Frank, it had been better for you to have been blind to every folly! That day you forged for yourself, by this impatient outbreak, a chain which fettered you for life. Mrs Miller fell into violent hysterics; shriek after shriek might have been heard issuing from the blacksmith's house; nothing could check the violence of the attack.

Frank Miller was filled with repentant horror. What had he done?—perhaps killed his wife. He sent in all directions for assistance, and the cottage was soon filled with the neighbouring matrons.

"It will be a mercy if she gets over it," croaked one.

"And the poor baby—that will be lost for sure!" whined another.

"Ah! yes, the poor, unborn, innocent little

cretur!" was the chorus; and looks of anger and disgust were directed towards Frank, who, nearly distracted, now sobbed forth :

" Oh, Nelly, Nelly, what a born brute I have been ! Only be quiet and don't go on in that way, and I pledge my word to you that for the time to come I will never thwart you by deed or word ; you shall do as you like—dress the child as a puppet if you choose—do anything."

But Mrs Miller was in reality, though dreadfully upset and hysterical, far from losing the faculty of hearing or seeing, and her quick eye soon perceived, even in the midst of the storm, the advantage she was on the point of gaining.

This was the moment for victory. Now or never. So she kicked and screamed on, and was at length carried to bed by her compassionate neighbours in a most alarming state of mind and body. And Frank was then almost beside himself with horror. Mrs Miller was in truth far too good a politician to allow herself to be well immediately. By the slowest degrees the most violent symptoms were subdued, and before night she was comparatively calm, but feeling very ill indeed.

"Yes, Frank," she murmured in an awful tone of voice, which filled the poor man's heart with the utmost contrition, "I am indeed very bad, but if the worst comes to the worst—and I feel as if I could not get over it—I forgive you."

"But, Nelly, I shall never forgive myself, not if I lived a thousand years; get well, do, old girl, and see if Frank Miller wont be the kindest husband that ever stepped. You shall never be thwarted; all I ask, I say, is that you will get well."

The battle was won. Frank Miller's reign was over from that moment. Mrs Miller was ill for many days after this business. She really suffered from the agitation caused by the commotion, and was sufficiently wide awake to manage her convalescence with skilful tact and generalship. It would not do to get well all of a sudden; it must be kept up to the *very last*. Frank must not think his behaviour a mere trifle; it must ever be a rod to be reserved to hold over his head *in terrorem*, in case of his chancing to forget what had happened. At length, after many days of seclusion and *petite santé*, Mrs Miller emerged from the seclusion

of her own room, a far more important woman than before she had entered it on that momentous evening. In short, to use a metaphor in the true blacksmith style,—

“The grey mare had become the best horse.”

CHAPTER III.

THE gossip of a small village is proverbial, particularly when there is such rich food provided for it as that afforded at Brooklands by the ill-assorted pair. Many were the nods and winks, whisperings and shakings of heads, whenever the subject was mentioned, or the couple chanced to be seen, either together or separate.

“Poor Frank, he has a down-look lately, hasn’t he?” said Mrs Higgins, the undergardener’s wife, one of the first performers in the scandal line, to a neighbour, as they walked behind him one Sunday afternoon to church.

“Where’s his fine lady, I wonder?” was the other woman’s remark.

“Oh, she’s too *delicate* to walk to church, she told me t’other day; she was lying her length on a sofa, forsooth, and drawled out: ‘The dear Marchioness never scarcely put her feet to the ground the last three months;’ just as if that had anything in the world to do with her.”

“Well, Mrs Higgins, they are both the same flesh and blood.”

“Yes, may be; but that’s neither here nor there; you may as lief talk of some hardy wild-flower, and them stove-plants my husband is always making such a work about; the one has been born and bred up hardy, used to sharp winds—rough sod—nothing hurts them; the others reared in hot-houses—not a blast of heaven’s air allowed to rest upon their heads—having constant care and nursing. This is all the same as respects women in our line and great ladies.”

“We have the advantage of them there, at any rate,” remarked Mrs Higgins’s companion.

“Yes, sure, and Nelly Rose that was ought to have it too, for wasn’t her mother a washer-

woman, and her grandmother before her ; and did not she stand at the wash-tub till she went to be nursery girl at the Court ? She ought to have some good hard-working blood in her veins, I think. Oh ! the conceit of that woman, does it not sicken me ? And I am vexed for poor Frank, who used to be an honest, jolly fellow,—he looks anything but that now—quite chap-fallen.”

“ And they say,” rejoined the other, “ there is such a sight of baby-clothes and presents arriving every day from the Court people—such stupid things they send, I hear ; so unsuitable like—just puffing up more and more that foolish body,—and Frank Miller, I understand, dare not say one word, since he made such a flare up, when he burnt up every stitch of baby-clothes he could lay his hands on, in the house, on the forge fire.”

“ He did not burn them, Mrs Brown, only made believe.”

“ Oh yes, Sally Smith declares every rag was burnt ; and dreadfully he went on, beat and ill-used his wife, and nearly killed her.”

“ No such thing !” interposed Mrs Higgins, pompously. “ I ought to know, having been sent for when Mrs Miller was took in the

'sterion;' they had words, that's all, and he did throw some little things within the empty grate, which were all picked out and got no harm; mayhap it would have been just as well had they all been burnt to cinders, for the good they will do; such things are not fit for the like of them; no luck will come of them, thinks I. However, Frank had time enough to make up his mind, many a year of courting; and so, as he has brewed, so he must bake."

And the grand event came off in time. The blacksmith's daughter entered this weary world one summer's afternoon. Poor babe! she received but a cold welcome from her father. It was with a look of disgust that he listened to the announcement made by one of the attendants, that a girl was born.

He left the house, and did not return till the evening, and then he found everybody in great confusion, and the doctor, who had been hastily summoned, about to leave the house.

"Your wife is very ill, Miller; how is it you are away at such a time? It is fortunate I happened to be in the village, for there was no one to fetch me."

"What now?" inquired Frank Miller.

"Mrs Miller has been in great danger; she

is better, but still in a precarious state. I shall be back again presently ; in the mean time I have sent for the curate ; your wife wished it."

Poor Frank turned deadly white ; he felt he had again been a great brute to have left his wife at such a moment. He turned to go upstairs, but his eyes encountered a little fairy bed, which had been placed upon a table ; no one was now in the room ; he looked round stealthily, and then approached it softly.

What a tide of new-born feelings rushed with a gush of overwhelming violence into the large heart of this honest man ! He was surprised at what he felt, wondered at the loud beatings of his heart, and the moisture which dimmed his eyes, as he lifted up the muslin curtain, and gazed into the little couch. There lay his child, and what father ever looked unmoved upon the face of his first-born ?


Certainly not such a one as Frank Miller. Tears, yes, *boná fide* tears, ran down his cheeks as he stooped and kissed, first the little hand above the coverlid, and then ventured to press his lips upon the velvet cheek.

"My child, my little child !" he murmured, "how I could love you, and how happy I should be, if only I could think yours would

be a good and happy life ; and you, pretty little one, if Frank Miller, your father," and his heart swelled at the thought of this new tie, "yes, your father, had his own way, he would try to make you both good and happy ; but, poor Nelly, I sadly doubt your bringing up of this tender little kid. Ah me ! already you look far more like a young lady than a blacksmith's daughter, in this fine basket-like crib, and with this soft satin face of yours ; and this dainty-looking hand, will it ever be able to do a day's work, I wonder ? "

And with increasing pride and admiration the blacksmith lingered, watching over his child, until the entrance of one of the women from above roused him from this contemplation, and he was ushered into his wife's sick room.

Mrs Miller was considerably better, but still seemed impatient for the arrival of the clergyman. When he came, she eagerly requested that the infant might be immediately baptized. The clergyman, imagining that there was some necessity, owing to the state of the child's health, that this ceremony should be performed, prepared without delay to administer the rite, and the infant was brought into the room.



A finer or more healthy-looking babe could not have been beheld.

Frank Miller could scarcely contain his feelings when he had a fuller view of his beautiful little daughter. This giant of a man ! a baby's touch had indeed unlocked his fast-closed heart ; a stream of gentle feelings, before unknown, swept into his stern nature. "Nelly," he said, "thank you for giving me such a baby, it must be another Nelly,—shall I tell the minister ? "

"No !" gasped the sick woman, "not for the world—let it be 'Violetta.' Lady Violet, you know, promised to be godmother."

"Nay, Nelly would be so much more natural like."

Mrs Miller became flushed from agitation. "Violetta !" she feebly persisted ; and the doctor at this moment entering, and seeing how matters stood, said: "For heaven's sake, Miller, don't dispute the point ; what does it signify ? It is as good as your wife's life is worth to argue the matter with her just now."

So the blacksmith's daughter was christened "Violetta," with the addition of "Rose," which her father insisted on adding. It had always been his wish to call the child by that

latter name, should it be a girl, and he had frequently thrown out hints that he would have no outlandish appellations. Ellen, he said, would be the most proper, but he should not object to "Rose." But Mrs Miller had arranged her plans quite differently, which she determined to carry with a *coup de main* in some manner or other, and her illness provided a glorious opportunity. There could be no arguing the point at such a moment, and so again the woman gained the victory over the man.

So it was in the beginning, and so it will be, more or less, to the end.

Mrs Miller was soon "as well as could be expected," and able to enjoy most fully her pretty babe and its fine clothes, and poor Frank was permitted to be a looker-on upon the scene; scarcely could he be called an actor. Only on Sundays,—those blessed days, he had now more than ever reason to call them,—when dressed in all his best, was he allowed the liberty to enjoy with anything like comfort his little child. The poor father! his love for that child became stronger, as day by day some new perfection dawned in the little person of his daughter.

What exquisite delight thrilled through his whole being when first he saw her smile, and her sweet face beamed with intelligence ! It was a marvel in his eyes, a regular phenomenon of nature. And then, when she began to notice objects, and the tiny hand was stretched forth to grasp what was held before her, his admiration and exultation knew no bounds. " No baby was ever like his baby."

It was truly wonderful to see Frank Miller tamed.

" And while an infant smiles in sleep,
Keeps guard lest it should wail and weep :
On tip-toe glides along the floor,
In dread to ope or close the door."

Our blacksmith became a totally altered man.

There are few human beings who have not one soft, weak point in their natures, which, when once discovered, brought forth, warmed and matured, will probably influence their whole future bearing, nay, even their destiny. The roughest specimens of mankind have their tender chord in hearts seemingly cast in stone. The chord may never have been touched, but there it is. The bump of philoprogenitiveness must have been the leading characteristic in Frank Miller's phrenological development,

for it seemed to preponderate now, even over combativeness ; at least, in one sense of the word, that of combating against the whims and will of his wife.

Mrs Miller ruled supreme ; not a word did he dare to say when things went wrong, which they constantly did. If he ventured to complain, poor man ! in a moment his mouth was stopped by, " The child, oh Frank, the child ! remember, if you vex me and make me ill, what will become of the poor darling ? "

" Well, I suppose I must wait a bit," he thought.

Yes, Frank Miller, you will have to wait, and that—for ever !

The only point to which he would not give way was the name. He would not call the child by that outlandish one—so he designated the romantic appellation of " Violetta,"—the Missus might, if she pleased ; nothing would make him do so ; the baby should be " Rose." " And like a rose sure she is, my own little pink-cheeked Rosy," and Rosy she always was to him.

" We must really settle about the christening, Frank," said Mrs Miller to her husband, a few weeks after the birth of the child.

"I thought it was done," answered the blacksmith.

"Done ! no such thing, the baby was only baptized—not christened."

"So much the better ; then we can change her name, I suppose ?"

"How very ignorant you are," indignantly his wife responded ; "the child was named, and nothing whatever can alter it."

"So much the worse. Well, I suppose next Sunday will do."

"That quite depends upon circumstances. I am not going to allow my child to be mixed up at the font with a swarm of little clodhoppers—labourers' children ; no, I shall watch my opportunity. I must say I think it is rather ridiculous of Mr Vernon not choosing to open the church for a christening any day but Sunday."

"I think he is all right there," returned Frank ; "and pray what harm can it do our child to be made a Christian of along with many another honest child ?"

"Well, Mr Miller,"—she always thus designated her mate when she wished to put the finishing stroke to any of her final decrees,—
"that is *my* opinion, and my determination, so

do not irritate me by argufying ; it is very bad for me. I am anything but strong, and this dear baby," &c. &c.

So Mrs Miller again had her own way, and she did watch her opportunity, and at length, one Saturday afternoon, informed her husband "that Violetta was to be christened next day."

"I have ascertained," she added, "that only Mrs Hope's baby is to be christened to-morrow. I have not the slightest objection to my sweet darling standing side by side with her sickly baby, poor body! "

"I think not, indeed," quoth Frank Miller, "but I say, Missus, are we not to have a jollification afterwards?"

"No, Frank, certainly not ; I am not strong enough for any such vulgar doings ; all I shall do, will be to give some cake and wine to a favoured few ; that, I can assure you, is the only way to do the thing genteelly."

"Genteelly, and be hanged!" muttered Frank, as he banged out of the house. "I'll go to the Glenmore Arms and give a supper, to drink her health. I'll have nothing to do with the Missus's cake and wine."

CHAPTER IV.

THAT same evening, in a small, very plainly and scantily furnished parlour belonging to a farm-house within a short distance of the village of Brooklands, a pale-faced young woman was seated, dressed in that saddest of all garbs, a widow's weeds.

She rocked with her foot a wicker cradle, whilst her hands were busied in putting in order an unostentatious baby's robe.

The poor young mother sighed often and heavily whilst she pursued this occupation. The babe for whom it was intended was evidently fatherless, and careworn and sorrow-

ful was the face of the widow. She worked on, and whilst so doing, tears fell from her meek eyes. "My poor little child," she murmured, "what a melancholy christening for you—no one to pray for, or to care for you; no one but God—and your poor mother"—

"Don't say that, mother, pray don't say that; there is some one besides you who will care for her, who will love her, and pray for her, and do everything for her—oh, never, never say that again, mother!"

And two little arms were thrown round her neck, and a little fair head nestled upon her bosom.

"My darling boy, my own Julian," the mother said soothingly; "yes, I know you will care for her, and love her, and you will always be a kind brother to your little sister. It is my only comfort to remember this; so do not cry, my precious child; I wish you had not heard my idle words; I did not even know you were in the room; at the moment I forgot myself. I was thinking of your father, Julian, and the day before you were christened, darling, when we were so proud, so happy, and when this little dress was new, brought home as a surprise to me by my husband."

And bitter tears again rained down from the mourner's eyes.

"Poor dear father!" was the little boy's murmured ejaculation. "Oh, mother, I don't wonder that you cry when you think of him; but I will indeed be a comfort to you; some of these days you will see what a useful boy I shall be to you, and what a good brother to this little darling."

And the boy knelt down by the side of the cradle, and kissed the face of its little occupant so fervently, that the little infant was awakened.

"What a little pet she is!" said the brother, as he hung over the baby, as it lay upon the mother's knee.

"She is a poor delicate little creature," Mrs Hope replied, "not like you, my Julian, at her age—you were such a fine stout baby."

"Oh, but I was a boy; I ought to have been larger," he said proudly.

Mrs Hope sighed and thought:

"Yes, and you were born under very different circumstances. All around was health and joy, our hearts brim-full of hope; it was before our trials really began. Julian," she continued, after a melancholy pause, "I have been think-

ing that you shall name the baby in church ; you are the only one left to care for her."

The boy gave an exclamation of delight.

"Oh, mamma, I am so glad," he said; "little darling! have you fixed upon her name?"

"Yes, Julian, it shall be Mary; *he* loved that name, *he* wished it to be so, and I love it so; it sounded so sweetly from his lips, 'My Mary!' and they were his last words."

The history of Mrs Hope is one of no uncommon nature, and can be related very briefly. She had been the humble relative of a proud lady, brought up in a great house, as a sort of playfellow to the children of the family. The poor girl possessed that unfortunate gift to the dependent—much personal beauty. The education she had received was first-rate, she having always made one of the school-room party, and it was decided that Mary Ellis was to study, in order to qualify herself for being a governess.

But *L'homme propose, Dieu dispose*. The youngest son, during a long Oxford vacation, fell in love with pretty Mary Ellis. He was intended for the church, but long before he was ordained, he actually married this girl, to the horror and dismay of his aristocratic

family. It was an act never to be forgiven, a blot in the escutcheon never to be effaced. Two thousand pounds were forwarded to him by Mrs Hope's solicitor, the only provision to which he could by right of settlement lay claim ; and he was given to understand that it was the last and only remittance he would ever receive from his mother. And so it was *the last !*

She died soon after this unfortunate marriage. Julian's name did not appear in her will, and his brother and sisters, attributing the premature death of a mother they all much respected to the shock she had received when the news of her son's marriage was conveyed to her, continued to consider the unfortunate young man a complete alien from his race ; his name was never mentioned ; his very remembrance they endeavoured to blot out from their minds.

And bitterly did Mary Ellis repent the course she had pursued ; not on her own account, poor girl ! but soon, too soon, did she discover how utterly she had been the means of destroying her husband's prospects for ever. His marriage with her had taken him out of his position in life, entailing upon him an existence

little in accordance with his birth, education, or previous habits. Julian Hope was only twenty-one when he married, consequently, two years must elapse before he could enter into holy orders ; and when he was ordained, it was with some difficulty that he obtained a meagre curacy. Inexperienced in matters of expenditure as they both were, it is not wonderful that they were obliged to dip largely into their small fund, and soon began, with reason, to look forward to the future with sickening dread. It was with penitent submission that Julian Hope now looked his fate steadily in the face ; he felt that he had brought all its evils upon himself, and with Christian meekness he took up the cross he himself had created. As a clergyman, he was never-failing in his duties, working hard and with unrelaxing zeal, although increasing delicacy of health, combined with restricted means, rendered his labours oftentimes most depressing.

Their boy was the joy and solace of their lives, the bright spot in their weary pilgrimage. A child he was indeed to prize. The parents' whole care and attention had been devoted to him. And so unselfish a nature, so affectionate and true a heart, even at so early an age, rarely

beat in human breast, as in that of their little son.

About a twelvemonth before the time when this story commences, Julian Hope had succeeded to the curacy of Brooklands. The emolument was rather larger than he had hitherto received, therefore he deemed himself most fortunate. Poor young man, it was with revived hope that he looked forward to the change, although the expense attending the move to that far-distant county he knew would be considerable and most inconvenient ; and the long journey, taken in the midst of an inclement winter, and a damp cold lodging in which they were at first located, laid the seeds of disease which terminated at last fatally,—an inflammatory attack on the chest, bringing on a cough which induced rapid consumption and death, leaving his young widow, with already a boy to provide for, the prospect of another child soon to be born, and only the scanty sum of the interest of the remaining money of his small portion.

Dreary indeed was the prospect opening before the forlorn young woman and her child, with not a friend on earth to whom she could turn for comfort or assistance. As she gazed upon that face in death—so changed with the

lines of care and sorrow, as well as sickness—she thought upon his mother, who once so loved this son.

Could she have looked upon him now, might she not have exclaimed :

“Oh, grief has changed thee since I saw thee last,
And careful hours, with time's deformed hand,
Have written strange defections in thy face.”

Mrs Hope well knew the deep, never-ceasing wretchedness her husband had endured at the idea of his mother, whom he really so tenderly loved, having left this world without forgiving him, and her death having been attributed to his misconduct.

These terrible thoughts had haunted the unfortunate young man on his bed of death ; and now that he was gone, nothing left to sustain her, she felt, and perhaps with truth, that she had been the cause of all the ills of her husband's sad career.

“Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy children trust in me.”

These words she murmured over and over again, as she lay powerless for many weeks after her husband's death ; and by the time her poor feeble little girl came into this world of sorrow,

she had gained years in strength of mind and purpose. She had vowed to God to consecrate her life to the well-being of her husband's children. If she ever rose from the bed of sickness, it would be with her loins girded to fulfil her duty by them in every sense of the word ; and by degrees these heaven-directed thoughts brought peace to her soul.

In this rough world, with all its irregularities, its coldness, and oftentimes total indifference to the wants, the sorrows of others, our hearts are warmed and cheered by finding some traces of the Master's footsteps. Good Samaritans are to be met with even in this selfish generation, and poor Mrs Hope, in her extremity of affliction, found the kindest, the most delicate consolation and assistance from the benevolence and sympathy of some good honest neighbours. Farmer Giles, a brother of the *ci-devant* blacksmith of Brooklands, had become well known to poor Julian Hope. A daughter had lately died of lingering illness, and her last days had been made peaceful and happy by the constant and never-failing attentions of the young curate. His own declining health and strength never kept him away from the sick-bed of the dying young woman ; and she at length departed,

blessing God that she had indeed learnt from him that "To die is gain."

Nothing could exceed the attention of the farmer's family during Mr Hope's last illness ; and before he died, the good man promised the poor young clergyman—whose anxiety for his wife was rendering more than usually bitter the parting hour—that she and her children should have a shelter beneath his roof—a home as long as they should require it.

This assurance soothed the pangs of death ; and to Woodleigh Farm was Mrs Hope and her boy conveyed, as soon as her husband's remains had been consigned to the tomb. It was truly a sight which touched the most callous by-stander, to watch the humble procession. The chief mourner, the little son—that fair, gentle boy—his face so prematurely broken-hearted in its expression, sobbing so piteously as he leant his head against the arm of the kind farmer, whilst standing by the side of the grave rapidly filling, and shutting out for ever every remaining earthly vestige of a father he had loved so tenderly. And poor Mrs Hope at length in sorrow and weakness gave birth to a little girl ; a babe so small and delicate that but slender hopes were entertained of its being

reared. But both mother and child were tended with the most devoted care by Mrs Giles and her daughter. And soon the interest of a mother towards her new-born babe, which even in ordinary cases fills a woman's heart—and how much more in such a one as this!—absorbed all feelings of selfish consideration, and gave a new impulse to her every action.

CHAPTER V.

IT was a beautiful autumn afternoon, the Sunday on which the christening of the two little girls we have ushered into the world was to take place. In the blacksmith's cottage the note of preparation was going busily forward. Such a grand paraphernalia was laid out on the bed, in which to deck the blacksmith's most lovely little daughter. Poor infant! it might indeed, by a fanciful imagination, have been suggested that a fairy god-mother had been there, bringing with her as her present the gift of perfect beauty, a gift so full of peril, and at best "a doubtful good."

Nothing could exceed the loveliness of this infant; one might with truth have said whilst gazing at her :

“ She looks as clear
As morning roses newly washed with dew.”

She had the fairest of skins, with already a peach blossom tint upon her round cheek, and then those wonderful large lustrous blue eyes, and every other feature giving promise of future beauty.

“ Yes, you are indeed my beautiful daughter,” ejaculated the proud mother, as she dressed with artistic skill her splendid baby in its handsome robe, and placed upon the little head a cap heavily trimmed with lace and ribbon.

“ She is indeed a bonny bird,” murmured the proud father, when permitted to hold the sleeping child on his knee, whilst “ the missus,” after putting the final stroke to her daughter’s toilette, was equipping herself in a suit worthy of the mother of the smart baby she had just attired, namely, a light silk dress, which could “ stand by itself,” a bonnet and shawl to match—a costume altogether suitable, in Mrs Miller’s opinion, to the *ci-devant* head-nurse of the Glenmore family.

And soon the christening *cortège* began to assemble, headed by Mrs Jenks, who was to personate the nurse for the occasion, and carry the child. It was to be done all *en règle*, according to the christenings Mrs Miller had been accustomed to attend. Mrs Evans, the housekeeper at the Court, and the steward, were to stand proxy for Lady Violet Lyle and the young Marquis, who had offered to be god-father to the nurse's daughter. A chosen few completed the party; not one of Frank Miller's chums was allowed to be included, and he dared not insist upon his claim to invite a guest. Poor man! he was beginning to knock under in all ways, without venturing a word of remonstrance. Cake and wine, and an elegant tea, were laid out for the guests on their return from church; everything was arranged after Mrs Miller's most approved rules of gentility; and it was with no small degree of proud exultation that she bustled out of her house, looking rather red and hot, and grown much more portly since she had gloried in the name of "mother;" her silk rustling, and her veil flying—endeavouring with all her might and main to look the

Marchioness ;—Mrs Jenks following with the baby in its long white mantle, trying to play her part, but if the truth were told, with a supercilious grin on her face, shrewdly entering into the absurdity of the pageant, although it was her interest to enact her character with due decorum.

Mrs Miller, according to what she considered proper etiquette, condescended to lean upon her husband's arm during the short walk to the church ; and honest Frank, dressed in his very best, his extremely handsome face beaming with the happy feelings of parental tenderness, with which his heart was that day brimful, was no despicable support, even to the haughtiness of the would-be great lady.

A different scene was enacting at the Woodleigh Farm. It was a house of mourning, not of feasting.

“Now, dear lady, do try to take heart,” were the kind words of the good farmer's wife, whilst she was taking upon herself the office of equipping the poor sickly-looking little infant for its christening. The mother was really unequal to perform this office for it that morning.

It was a piteous sight to look upon the poor young widow, as she sat motionless, in tearless abstraction. Mrs Giles was doing her best, but her experience in adorning a babe was very limited ; it was many a day since she had handled so young an infant, and her present attempt was rather awkward. Julian stood by, divided between the pleasant feeling which swelled at his heart, at the idea of the important part he was about to take in that day's event, and sorrow at witnessing the deep misery of his mother.

But all is now completed, and the farmer announces that the light covered cart is ready ; the melancholy party are soon at the church door, where they encounter the gay cavalcade from the cottage. Farmer Giles lifts the slender form of Mrs Hope from the vehicle, her long crape veil covering her face, and is followed by his wife and daughter, the former bearing in her arms the little infant. Last of all came the child Julian ; his deep suit of mourning rendering the paleness of his face only the more conspicuous. He hastened immediately to his mother's side, taking her hand between both of his, which he tenderly pressed, look-

ing up at the same time in her face with an expression which melted the hearts of all who observed it.

“What a dismal-looking set!” remarked Mrs Miller to Mrs Jenks, “quite a damper, I declare, to us! I wonder what the baby is like, that Mrs Giles is smothering up under that great shawl; upon my word, considering they are in the genteel line, I never saw a more shabby turn out.”

“No, certainly, Madame Miller, rather different from the grand flare-up we are making,” remarked Mrs Jenks, perhaps a little ironically; and then, as Mrs Miller moved away to speak to some one, she whispered to one of the by-standers:

“No, not so grand, indeed, and yet one, after all, is real, and the other false. Look at that poor dear boy; is he not a gentleman every inch of him, and with as good blood in his veins as any in the land? And his mother is a real lady in all her ways, poor lady! and,” she continued, as she looked contemptuously at the blacksmith’s wife, “with all her fine clothes, *what*, I should like to know, is she?”

We have always noticed that there is a clear perception in the minds of the lower

orders with regard to the real and counterfeit claims of different classes to their consideration, and that they feel an inherent respect for gentle birth and gentle breeding, seldom giving place to any other adventitious circumstance.

The two christening parties were now assembled round the font ; the church was crowded with spectators, who had remained after the evening service in order to witness the ceremony. Julian still kept close to his mother's side, holding tight by her dress. He was beginning to lose all his courage, poor boy, seeing how her agitation increased, how she trembled, and what heavy tears fell from her eyes. The farmer, his wife, and daughter, were to be sponsors for the baby. Mr Vernon, the rector, had only lately succeeded to the living of Brooklands, and this was almost the first christening at which he had officiated in the parish. He was a tall, pale man, of about thirty-five years old, with a peculiarly benign expression of countenance. Before commencing the service his eye made a survey of the group, and irresistibly his gaze was attracted, and his heart touched, by the appearance of the widow and her son, forming, as they did, so strong a contrast to the opposite assemblage.

Every eye had been attracted towards the boy, and the general attention seemed to fasten alone on him as the service proceeded, for indeed it was a beautiful and wonderful sight to look upon the countenance of that young child, as he knelt in his black dress with clasped hands and up-turned face—his light locks falling back from his forehead, his lips following with such heartfelt devotion every word spoken by the clergyman. An artist might indeed have gloried in such a study for an infant Samuel, and we have seen a statue of that saintly child which reminds us greatly of the countenance and attitude of Julian Hope, as he knelt that day in the little church of Brooklands, although no marble statuary could ever convey an adequate idea of the expression of his face at that moment.

And now the service had arrived at that part when Mr Vernon takes the infant into his arms and says, "Name this child." Then Julian steps eagerly forward, but suddenly his look of inspiration seems to vanish, his cheek grows paler than ever, his voice trembles, his tongue refuses to speak. Again the clergyman says, "Name this child," and Julian falters forth :

“ Mary.”

A throng of remembrances rushed into his baby mind as he pronounced the name,—his father’s dying accents—his mother’s agony—his own great sorrow,—and bursting into a violent fit of weeping, he threw himself into his mother’s arms.

Most contagious was the emotion throughout this large assembly ; tears were shed by not a few of the spectators, and Mr Vernon was obliged to pause and clear his voice several times before he could proceed with the service. Even the sturdy blacksmith was seen to pass his hand several times across his eyes, and not till admonished by an impressive nudge from his wife, accompanied by a frowning glance, was he roused, from contemplating the boy, to the proper degree of interest it was expected of him to evince as the clergyman proceeded in his administration of the rite which was to confirm his own child as a Christian. Different, indeed, was the lovely, healthy, well-dressed infant which was now placed in his arms, to the poor, feeble, wailing babe he had just relinquished.

Mr Vernon could scarcely believe that it could be the village blacksmith’s progeny, thus

decked in all the pomp of christening finery, and whom he was about to endow with the romantic names of "Violetta Rose."

Mr Vernon possessed a natural love for young children, and, moreover, could not fail to be struck by the wonderful beauty of this little one, who, when the water was thrown into her face, instead of the usual cry which generally follows after that process, only opened wide a pair of magnificent blue eyes and smiled.

There is, we believe, a superstitious idea connected with the circumstance of a child not crying when it is christened; old nurses consider it so unlucky if they remain passive when the water is splashed upon the face, that we have heard tell of their inflicting some trifling bodily pain to elicit the desired ebullition.

"And what will be the future fate of those two children?" might have been the suggestive idea of some inquiring spectator. Peace and prosperity were the present characteristics of the blooming little Violetta; sickness, sorrow, and misery, those of the widow's unpromising Mary. But these beautiful words of consolation and hope might also be the thought of some good Christians, as they watched the mother press the poor infant tenderly to her

heart, and turn her meek eyes upwards, to invite a blessing from the Father of the fatherless upon her sickly child :

“ God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.”

“ Young sir, if you please, my missus is agreable that your mother should come to our house and have a glass of wine ; it is close by, and I’m sure, poor soul, she stands in need of it.”

These kind words were spoken, and a friendly hand was laid upon little Julian’s shoulder, as he was following his mother out of the church, just after the christening ceremony was concluded.

Mrs Miller—seeing at once that Mrs Hope had created a sensation, and that, notwithstanding her unpretending exterior, she was certainly not a nobody, and whose heart besides, with all its folly, was not without its softness, and was particularly vulnerable when children were concerned—without hesitation seconded her husband’s earnest request that the party from the farm might be invited to their house before they returned home. The invitation was gently declined ; Mrs Hope said she was anxious to return home on the baby’s account, and Mrs Miller, with real good-will, then offer-



ed to be of use, could her advice and experience be of any service to Mrs Hope in the management of her ailing infant. In fact, the clever nurse longed to take in hand and exercise her skill upon the child, seeing at one glance that it simply wanted such good tending as only herself could achieve.

Mrs Hope gratefully accepted the offer, too glad of assistance in a science in which she felt she was deficient, that of rearing so tender a plant as a delicate babe. Mrs Miller promised to call at the farm the next day, and thus commenced an acquaintance between the two families. Mrs Miller really proved of the greatest use to the poor young widow, enlarging her limited knowledge of nursery management. The clever, experienced practitioner soon wrought wonders upon the health and appearance of little Mary, and though she could, neither in beauty nor size, ever bear any comparison with the beautiful Violet, she grew plump and calm, and her small pale face lost the expression of pain which she seemed to have brought into the world with her. And Julian was proud and happy, dividing his love between the two babies. He was often at the forge, having established a wonderfully good

understanding between himself and Frank Miller, whose admiration for the boy was something marvellous ; and indeed Mrs Miller, who seldom sympathized in her husband's tastes, fully entered into this. Julian was in every way "genteel." *Comme il faut*, she would have liked to have said, but could not quite venture.

But independent of her knowledge that the boy's father and connections were in a superior grade of life, she was naturally fond of children ; that was her one redeeming point ; and Julian's sweet disposition and winning ways soon won her heart, particularly when the little Violet began to know him, and to hold out her arms to him, never being known to weep so bitterly as when he was obliged to leave her. Frank Miller was a man of good capacity, and by no means vulgar mind. He was getting on in the world ; made the superintendent of the Glenmore stables, with a large salary, where a noble stud was always kept ; not that the young Marquis cared for horses,—his tastes were studious and sedentary, but he considered it his duty to keep up what appeared an heir-loom, and left the arrangements of the large concern en-

tirely to Frank Miller, in whom he placed the most implicit confidence. The business of the forge thrived well under his management, and he was also much employed in the neighbourhood as a horse doctor, so that his pecuniary affairs were most flourishing, and even Mrs Miller was beginning to be rather proud of her handsome spouse, when she saw him dressed in trim attire, riding off on a right good nag, on veterinary business intent; and so several years passed away.

* * * * *

“A letter for Mistress Miller!” the postman was heard to say, as he delivered one at the blacksmith’s door one summer’s morning,—and joyful were its contents. “Dear nurse,” wrote Lady Violet, “I am sure you will be glad to hear that we are to spend the summer at the Court. In a fortnight we are to be at our dear old home, and there you must be to meet us. How delighted we shall be to see you, dear Rose, and my little god-daughter, no words can describe!”

And joyful indeed was Mrs Miller, when, with all a mother’s pride, she adorned her beautiful daughter to meet her noble patrons. No wonder the vain woman exulted in the

surpassing loveliness of the child—loveliness which, in fact, could scarcely be surpassed, if equalled. Mrs Miller was at her post, waiting in the hall of the Court to receive the family the day of their arrival, little Violet by her side, dressed to perfection. She was not disappointed with the meed of praise which was so enthusiastically bestowed upon the little creature, and sincerely happy was the nurse, her heart warming towards all her beloved nurslings, particularly towards the young Lord Victor, her last petted charge; and the boy, a fine dark-haired child, seemed at once to take to his former friend, and delighted her by his entire admiration of her child. Indeed, Violet seemed to stand a good chance of being pulled to pieces by her new friends, but she bore it well, and most condescendingly distributed her smiles and kisses, and accepted with wonderful ease of manner the presents which were showered upon her. Nurse Rose was again in her element.

CHAPTER VI.

HAPPY times were these, when the young ladies were for ever running in and out of the cottage, and Lord Victor was never happy but when either there himself, or he had little Violet at the Court.

“And who is that boy I met in the garden, leading by the hand a pale little girl?” asked Lady Violet of Mrs Miller one morning, during one of her visits. “I have several times seen him, and been struck by his appearance ; there is something so very peculiar about him.”

“Oh, I suppose you mean young Julian Hope,” replied Mrs Miller.

“Yes, now I remember Mr Vernon talking

of the Hopes ; tell me something more about them, dear Rose ; that boy has interested me more than I can describe."

"Well, he is a good boy, that I must confess," answered Mrs Miller ; "and, my dear, do you know, he is a gentleman all over."

And then she proceeded to tell the story of the family, of course bringing herself forward as the most important performer in the last years of the narrative ; saying how she had saved the puny girl's life by her wonderful management ; how she had assisted the poor miserable mother, and put her into the way of getting on. "You know, my dear, she is above the common line, has had a good education, but, poor thing ! a more ignorant creature in the ways of the world never did I see ; and as for handling a baby, such bungling work ! it was cruel to behold the poor child left to her tender mercy ; it made my blood boil."

"But, dear Rose," interposed Lady Violet, amused at the nurse's vehemence in the cause of her vocation, "you ought to have remembered that you stood alone as the queen of all nurses—no one was ever like you ; I dare say poor Mrs Hope did her best."

"Well, yes, poor body, I suppose she did ;

and it was the first time she had had to nurse a baby all by herself."

"Are they very poor?" inquired Lady Violet.

"Why, as to that, I believe they have little enough, but Mrs Hope brings up that boy very well, keeps him aloof from every one in the village but ourselves; and as for Mr Vernon," she added, with a slight toss of her head, "he makes fuss enough, and to spare, about the boy; I wonder it does not turn his head. I believe he would keep him from *us* if he could—nothing good enough for him but his own spoilt child; but, no, Julian loves my darling as much, if not more, than he does that little white-faced sister of his. As for Frank, he is as great a fool as any one about the boy, and makes as much ado about him as if he were one of my Lady's own sons. He teaches him to ride, and is never so happy as when they are doing something together."

"I like to hear that, nurse," exclaimed the young lady with great feeling; "I am so glad to find you have such a kind, good husband."

"Yes, kind enough, I will say, but I can assure you, Lady Violet."—and Mrs Miller pursed up her mouth, and put on a consequential air—"he has required a good deal of school-

ing; you little know what I have had to go through—so miserable I was when I first married.”

“Were you, indeed?” said Lady Violet, affectionately embracing her nurse as she prepared to take her departure. “I am sorry to hear that, but I am sure you are happy enough now, dear Rose: I think you are much to be envied with such a good husband, such a sweet child, and such a pretty cottage as this.”

That evening at the Court, during dinner, Julian Hope was the subject of conversation. The Marquis was a young man of a serious turn of mind, fond of grave literary pursuits, amiable and kindly disposed, though reserved in his deportment towards strangers, and retiring in his habits. He had that morning called upon the rector, and had been shown into the study.

Mr Vernon was not in the room, but Lord Glenmore found it occupied by a boy reading at a table covered with lesson books, who rose immediately on his entrance, and was about to leave the room, when the young lord, attracted by that indescribable expression in his face which seemed to draw every one towards him, laid his hand upon his shoulder and asked him

what he was studying? It was a Greek author. Lord Glenmore continued to converse with him, pleased and surprised by his sensible replies given in so gentleman-like a manner, until Mr Vernon entered, and Julian took up his books and left the room. "What a delightful boy that is of yours, Mr Vernon!" was Lord Glenmore's exclamation when they were alone.

"I wish indeed he was mine," said Mr Vernon; "he is a boy any father might be proud of. Poor fellow, and his fate is a most sad and apparently unjust one; could you believe that this boy's uncle is the rich and influential Mr Hope of Lilford Towers, and yet that he is left for support and education to the sole care of his mother, who has not more than a pittance to maintain him and his little sister?"

"I know something of Mr Hope of Lilford Towers," replied the Marquis; "he is a neighbour of ours in —shire; he makes himself very conspicuous in the political world; our views do not agree, and I cannot say I am prepossessed in his favour. He certainly looks a hard man, but I have heard that he has domestic afflictions, which may account for his

gloomy appearance : one son a confirmed cripple ; the other hopelessly wild."

"A hard man he must assuredly be," rejoined Mr Vernon, "dead to all good feelings, to allow his brother's children to be brought up in poverty, when he is overwhelmed with wealth."

The Marquis, as he left the rectory, again encountered Julian, who was helping the clergyman's little daughter in some gardening employment. He renewed his kindly notice of the boy, asking him to the Court the ensuing day, to join the young party who dined at luncheon time, and to which little Sylvia Vernon, who was a great pet of the Ladies Lyle, had been invited.

A delightful time, indeed, this was to the children, not only of the Court, but those surrounding it. A universal holiday seemed to be held, nothing but pleasure the order of the day. The Marchioness, a most indulgent mother, held the reins of government with the gentlest hand ; and with no father to interpose prudence, order, and those necessary restraints which a man's clear judgment at once sees necessary and enforces, the young family had their own way as much as it was possible. They

were, however, an amiable party, the three girls promising well ; the eldest nearly reaching the age of womanhood, in all ways “ lovely, and of good report ; ” the young Marquis truly excellent in all essential points, only wanting more confidence in himself—more ability to play the part assigned to him in the great drama of life,—a conspicuous part, for which he did not seem quite fitted ; a quiet sphere—a life of contemplation and study appearing better adapted to him. But it was ordered otherwise, and he was willing and desirous to fulfil his destiny well and conscientiously.

Lord Victor was so young that it would, perhaps, have been premature to judge of his future character at that period. Certainly, all that could then be said might be summed up in the remark that he was a most beautiful boy, labouring under the disadvantage of being the youngest child of a widowed mother, and most perniciously indulged from his earliest years. All the family seemed spell-bound by the little despot, and vied with each other in succumbing to his tyrannical and, too often, most unamiable will.

Sylvia Vernon was another juvenile *dramatis persona*, whom, as a future character of in-

terest in this story, we must here present to our readers. The high-spirited, vivacious little daughter of the rector drank her fill of enjoyment, grew wilder, more excitable every hour under the influence of the never-failing amusement which prevailed, much to the horror of a most strait-laced governess her father had provided for her; fondly hoping, good man, that her strict views and careful management might, in a measure, counteract the indulgence he felt he was pouring with too unsparing a hand upon his child.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM this time might be dated a new era in the existence of Julian and his mother.

The Marchioness and her daughters visited Mrs Hope, and were at once attracted by the superior bearing of the widow, and delighted with her young son.

How soothingly their attentions fell upon the heart of the forlorn young woman can only be imagined by those who have suffered, as she had done, the loneliness of bereavement and desertion. Julian, as well as his mother and little sister, were now very often at the Court ; Lady Glenmore thought that Julian's society would be advantageous to the over-indulged

Lord Victor, and fain would he, both from respect and gratitude towards those who were so good to him, and the natural affectionate quality of his heart, have attached himself to and endeavoured to conciliate the unruly boy.

But, strange to say, though so beloved and admired by all the other members of the family, Lord Victor seemed from the first to conceive a dislike to him. It was, doubtless, in its commencement a feeling of childish envy and jealousy at hearing Julian's praises, perhaps a little injudiciously, poured into his ears by his sisters, who, wearied out sometimes by the tyrannical *exigence* of the spoilt child, would hold up the other boy as an object for his imitation.

Human nature unaided by fixed principle can rarely bear rivalry.

Rochefoucauld says: "The truest mark of being born with great qualities is to be born without envy;" and this dark spot, which showed itself so early, and in so conspicuous a manner, in the character of the boy, was no earnest of future excellence.

Lord Victor had, from the moment he first beheld her, taken a violent fancy to the little Violet, and until Julian's introduction to the

Court, had reigned supreme in her baby-smiles and caresses ; she was his complete plaything. But now she had become a bone of contention.

He never could forget that the little girl, however happy she might have been before his arrival, immediately on Julian's entrance rushed from him into Julian's arms, the proud little Lord becoming from that moment quite a secondary object to the small beauty.

"I hate and detest that Julian Hope," he said one day whilst riding on his pony with a young groom, his special escort on those occasions, and a great favourite with the boy.

"Do you, my Lord ? I should not think that worth your while ; what is such a one as him to you ; that poor-looking, paled-faced lad ?" was the rejoinder only to be expected from such a *confidant*.

"Yes, but it is not pleasant to hear my sisters from morning till night saying how good he is, so much better than I am ; even mamma says so, and tells me to be like him ; she never spoke so before. And that baby Violet, too, does she not push me away, and behave quite rudely if I try to make her come to me when he is near ?"

The groom grinned.

"Never mind, my Lord, stop a bit; she won't do that a few years hence; wait till you are both men, and then see which she will like best; whether she will not snap her fingers at that beggarly lad."

"I wish that time was come then; would not I like to vex and plague him? Don't you hate people who are thought better than you, Tom? *I do.*"

"Why, as to the matter of that, Lord Victor, I am so used to that there. I never was thought much of a good 'un, so it is nothing to me to be abused whilst others are praised. If I were you, I shouldn't care about the spooney fellow; you'll soon be a rare 'un my little Lord."

And this was the companion the little Lord most delighted in; one of the most ill-conditioned lads in the Marquis's stable department; but clever and sharpwitted, he had made himself a great favourite with the boy, beginning by running by the side of his diminutive Shetland pony, and entering into all his out-door amusements, thus recommending himself to the Marchioness, who extended her favour to all those who added to the enjoyment of her spoilt darling.

How little do mothers estimate the direful effects, the pernicious consequences of the early association of their sons with low minds and persons of vicious habits; it is poison to the mental health, which is seldom ever eradicated. We know that the impressions of early youth are ever the most indelible, either for good or for ill; the seeds of evil once sown will spring up some time or other, unless destroyed by means superhuman.

Tom, the groom, had his own reasons for his spite against Julian Hope, and for widening the breach between him and the young Lord Victor. Frank Miller had taken great pains to make Julian a fearless rider. Lord Glenmore sent all his horses to Brooklands that they might be broke under the auspices of the experienced ex-head groom. Frank had free liberty to use any of the Marquis's stud, and he used to mount Julian at an early age constantly upon horses which had been sent down to be trained for the special use of the young ladies.

Tom Jones never forgave the boy Julian for being able to sit a mare which had thrown him over her head several times, and for having, by his light hand and good seat, made

the animal so manageable, that it proved a safe and pleasant horse for Lady Violet. Frank Miller was apt to boast a little too loudly of his favourite's feats in that line, bringing upon Julian the jealousy and spite of many a youthful stable menial.

Nothing offends so keenly the self-love of men, particularly in early youth, as any superiority in others, on such points as touch upon their personal prowess. Learning, nay, even any degree of perfection in the cardinal virtues observed in others, weighs lightly in the balance, in comparison with those superficial advantages which touch upon the pride of manhood. How generally, in our great schools, is the hero of the day, not the scholar—the boy distinguished by conduct worthy of a Christian—but the one who has proved himself the mightiest in the fight—in the cricket field; who can beat all in the race, and every athletic sport; whose *escapades* have filled the masters' hearts with indignation and dismay, and his companions with a morbid species of intense admiration. And in the case of our young Julian,—no one in the Glenmore stables would have grudged the pale, unpretending boy his goodness, his knowledge, and his manifest supe-

riority of birth and education, but when his slight form was seen placed triumphantly by Frank Miller on horses Tom Jones's rough hands could never guide; when Frank Miller, who was considered infallible,—as the most knowing man in that line in England,—was always singing his praises, telling every stranger that he could show them a sight—a boy who looked as delicate as a young lady, but who had the heart of a lion—such pluck—such courage—such a hand—such a seat—could sit anything, manage the most vicious, the most unbroken animal, then did the stable-men, like their young lord, “hate Julian Hope.”

“I have thought of a plan for Julian Hope,” said Lord Glenmore, at breakfast one morning. “Our uncle, Lord Littledale, is one of the Governors of Burleigh House; I shall write and ask him, as a special favour, either to give or procure for me a nomination for the boy.”

This idea was received with much applause by the assembled party; and Lord Glenmore wrote to his uncle by that day's post. Before the family again deserted the Court, at the end of summer, the request was granted, and Lord Littledale informed his nephew that a nomin-

ation was at his disposal for the ensuing spring.

Mrs Hope received the intelligence from Lord Glenmore's own lips, and her gratitude was in proportion to the boon that was conferred. The Marquis further promised that he, as well as his mother, should continue to watch over the welfare of her son when in London; and proposed that he should go to his house in the first instance, so that he might himself be enabled to accompany him to Burleigh House. On taking leave of the widow, who was already overwhelmed by his kindness, the considerate young man, in the most delicate manner, begged her acceptance of a note of some value.

"My dear Mrs Hope," he said, "I consider Julian henceforth quite my charge; therefore I must request you will accept this gift for his sake; you will have some extra expenses on his account before he leaves you; and believe me, that I rejoice to be able in any way to lighten your cares."

Kind, good man! the bread cast upon the waters will return to you—it will be your comfort in after days, should sickness or sorrow be your lot, to remember how you befriended the

fatherless and the widow. It was a melancholy time at Brooklands, those few months which preceded Julian's departure, and, as the day drew near, many hearts besides the mother's were very heavy. The boy had endeared himself to all who knew him well. Mr Vernon had redoubled his exertions in forwarding his studies, in order that he might at once take a high place in the school, and he felt that his departure would create a void in his existence not easy to endure.

And Mr Vernon's little daughter Sylvia entered most warmly into her father's feelings of regret at the idea of parting with one who had for so long been her friend and play-fellow—always kind and ready to do the bidding of the indulged only child of the widowed rector.

“What shall I do without Julian?” she said in a mournful tone of voice to her governess, as she walked in the pretty garden surrounding the rectory, a few days previous to his departure. “Who will help me this spring to sow all my seeds?—and so much we were going to do—such improvements! Now I shall never care for my garden again. I shall tell old Roberts he may do what he likes with it. I'll

not dig or water it any more. Oh, that horrid Burleigh House ! I wish there was no such place in the world."

"I am very sorry to hear you talk so foolishly, Miss Vernon," replied her grave-looking instructress ; "it is no proof of your regard for Julian Hope, wishing to deprive him of so valuable a boon as a good education ; had he been your brother, you would still have had to part with him in order that he might go to some school or college."

"Brother ! I like Julian Hope better than twenty brothers !" exclaimed the impetuous little lady. "I don't think brothers, in general, are half so kind to their sisters as he has been to me. Look at Lord Victor, that naughty boy, how he fights with his sisters ; how little he cares whether they are pleased or not, so that he has it all his own way : and the boys at Ashton Hall, when they are at home for the holidays, I am sure they are rude and rough enough to the Miss Somervilles, who are all glad when they go off to school again. How different from Julian !"

"I quite agree with you, my dear, that he is a very superior boy, and for that very reason

you ought more than ever to rejoice that he is about to receive a good education, which may assist his career through life. Poor boy, I fear his case is a very forlorn one."

"Well, I am sure," now sobbed forth the little girl, "I hope this horrid school may do him good, but I know it will make me very unhappy to lose him, and so it will Mrs Hope and little Mary."

"Yes, I can feel for his mother, whose only comfort he has been ; but I am quite ashamed of you, Miss Vernon, for giving way in this most childish manner upon a subject which ought to be of such minor importance to you."

"Ashamed of me, Miss Wilkinson?" the little lady exclaimed, indignant sparks now flashing from her before tearful eyes ; "you are very cruel, you ought to be very sorry for me when you see how miserable I am. I shall go to papa—he will pity me." And the impulsive child rushed off, and never slackened her pace until she had reached the study. There she paused, for she heard voices within ; one she distinguished as Julian's.

She opened the door, then entered so gently,

that at first she was not perceived. The boy was kneeling before Mr Vernon, his head bent down upon the rector's knees ; he was evidently weeping, and Mr Vernon's countenance bore traces of emotion, but he was now saying with attempted cheerfulness, "Come, you must cheer up, dear boy ; we must not look sad when your mother and little Mary arrive to dinner, and you know we have a great deal to do this evening. Sylvia has a grand plan of amusement in store for us."

"But Sylvia does not care for anything now, she never will be happy again !" she exclaimed ; and once more her tears burst forth as she ran forward and threw her arms round her dear playmate's neck, and wept upon his bosom.

Poor Sylvia, it makes one tremble for her future fate, to see her so excitable in her feelings at her age ! What a promise does it give of a life of exaggerated trouble and unrest !

"Life is a sea where storms must rise,
'Tis folly talks of cloudless skies."

She will, no doubt, have much to encounter, but we must hope that she possesses within her the germs of counteracting qualities ; that amidst the keen susceptibility of her nature

she has been blessed with reason sufficient to control her feelings, and when more matured in age and experience, will be able to view more calmly the path of life appointed for her, and say, when her passion strives for mastery, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further."

CHAPTER VIII.

JULIAN left Brooklands in company with Mrs Miller and her little daughter, who had also been invited to spend a few weeks with the Glenmore family at Whitehall Gardens. This was a most kind arrangement, and very much softened the pain of separation to the boy. It was, however, a melancholy party that stood on the railway platform, watching the departure of the train; none, however, so demonstrative in their grief as Sylvia Vernon, who made no endeavour to conceal her impatient sorrow.

“Oh! Julian, Julian, what shall I do without you?” were the last words he heard, as

he was hurried into the carriage, and his young heart responded warmly to all the affectionate regret evinced on his account; truly sorrowing for his mother, who, he well knew, must miss his society so bitterly. For had he not been everything to her for so long ?

We never could agree with Juliet—"That parting is such *sweet* sorrow;" rather substitute the word *bitter* !

All was change and novelty to the uninitiated Julian. They were travelling in great comfort, according to the directions received from Lord Glenmore, in a first-class carriage, Madam Miller as grand as a Duchess.

"I always make it a rule," she said, "to dress well on a journey; it is wonderful how it raises people; none of your scrub dresses for me on such occasions; and a pair of new gloves is quite indispensable."

Violet also sported the most becoming of travelling costumes.

The good woman had forgotten nothing that could administer to the comfort of herself and the children; a basket, a dear friend of former journeys, was filled with the most tempting sandwiches, cakes, and fruits, ready to be pro-

duced at the first approach of hunger. Julian's tears, which fell at first in abundance, were soon kissed away by the pretty Violet, who had immediately established herself on his knee—her favourite seat. She had also shed a few tears on leaving Frank Miller's arms, when he placed her in the carriage, for she was a loving little soul, and doted on her father.

The poor man was very loath to part with his little darling, but she would soon return. His sorrow at Julian's departure was his greatest trouble just then.

"I fear he will never be the same to me; they will make a fine gentleman of him, and I love him as my own. Yes, Madam," he said, addressing himself to Mrs Hope, after brushing his hand hastily across his eyes, "I pity you to have lost such a lad; but I suppose it's all right, and best for him, so try to bear up." And the poor mother did try to bear up, as she walked back to her desolate home; hers had always been a life of trying "to bear up."

The travellers sped on cheerily enough. At first they had the carriage to themselves, but soon other passengers got in. Mrs Miller

was in her glory ; she felt that she had returned to her original element—the most important person in the travelling *suite* of the Marchioness of Glenmore. At this moment, however, she was herself the great lady in her own right. Violet soon fell fast asleep in Julian's arms ; her hat removed, her splendid hair falling in such beautiful ringlets over her face and neck, her cheeks flushed with the brightest peach-blossom tint, she certainly looked the perfection of beauty. Proudly swelled the mother's heart as she listened to all the rapturous admiration bestowed on the lovely child by her fellow-passengers. How surprised would the fine ladies have been, who travelled with them for a short distance, had they known the real circumstances of the fairy beauty whose aristocratic features, finely moulded limbs, and general bearing stamped her in their consideration as a child of condition, something quite above the common line, travelling, as they supposed, with her brother and nursery governess ; for, notwithstanding her silk dress, handsome shawl, and floating veil, to say nothing of a pair of bright lilac gloves drawn tightly over her plump hands, Mrs Miller did not look unmistakably a lady.

And, for the consolation of those ladies whose servants dress far smarter than themselves, we would remark that though "Fine feathers make fine birds," they rarely disguise the real position of the wearer.

A lady seldom looks anything but a lady, even in a dress of the shabbiest description; whereas, ape her betters as she may, heap on flowers and ribbons, flounces and furbelows, there is always a certain indescribable something which draws a decided line of demarcation between the two classes, which, we should say, rarely fails to note their distinctive positions. How wonder-struck would have been Violet's fellow-passengers,—great ladies, who got out at Slough and entered a royal carriage which was in attendance for them—ladies in waiting to her Majesty, we suppose,—if some little bird had whispered in their ear that the sleeping beauty was a "village blacksmith's daughter!"

There was another passenger in the railway carriage whose gaze seemed to be attracted, not to the contemplation of the charms of the little girl, but to the countenance of the boy, on whose bosom she reclined in so picturesque an attitude.

He was an elderly man, upon whose stern features were impressed the lines of grave thought and care ; care which had not softened, but rather hardened, his natural character.

Julian was far too engrossed with his darling little charge to remark the furtive glances the stranger cast ever and anon upon him ; and whose brow darkened and contracted from the influence of some inward feeling, either of displeasure or pain, whilst he gazed upon him ; and who then turned away with a groan-like sigh, and busied himself again with his book, as if provoked with himself for dwelling upon some idea which might have crossed his brain, with a seeming determination not to look again, but who soon, as if forgetting this resolve, again fixed his eyes unconsciously, as it were, upon the boy.

Mrs Miller, however, who was wide awake to what passed, saw it all. At first she thought it was her beautiful child who had attracted the gentleman's notice, and, flattered as she always was by such demonstrations, with a simper addressed him, mincing her words, as was her custom when wishing particularly to play the lady.

“ A pretty child, is she not, sir ? ” she said.

The stranger looked round upon her with a sort of amazed disdain. It seemed that he considered that a sufficient answer, but the simpler continuing, awaiting his reply, he said, in the shortest manner possible, "No doubt, Madam!" and turned his eyes resolutely upon his book, and his back upon her.

"A rude unmannerly brute!" was the inward ejaculation of the outraged mother. "I suppose it was Julian, then, that he was staring at in that fierce manner; well, I wonder what he thought of *him*; he certainly looks very well to-day, with his cheeks so flushed and dressed so nicely, and I should like to know who is to be thanked for that; a pretty figure his mother would have sent him off, if I had not gone twice with him to the tailor's and given directions about his clothes, and seen them tried on. After all, there is nothing particular to stare at in the boy; he is a good child and looks pleasant, that's all." At this moment Violet awoke, and Julian gladly consigned her to her mother.

He had been for some time longing to go to the other window, from whence he had been told that he could obtain a passing glimpse of Windsor Castle; and no sooner was he released

from his burden, than he darted head-long towards it, unmindful of the gentleman's legs, over which he nearly tumbled. With a "beg your pardon, sir," and a smiling glance at the stern face, he fearlessly took his seat opposite to him, looking anxiously out of the window, saying, "Please, Mrs Miller, tell me exactly when I ought to look out for it."

After a few minutes had elapsed, Julian, whose head had continued pertinaciously leaning out of the window, was almost startled by a deep voice close to him, which said :

"What do you want to see?"

"Windsor Castle, sir," the boy replied.

"Then there it is."

Far too swiftly for Julian sped the train, giving him but a transient view of the proud old pile so full of storied and poetical interest, rearing its irregular walls and massive towers like a mural crown round the brow of a lofty ridge, and waving its royal banner in the air upon the surrounding world. The boy was breathless, speechless, from the intensity of his feelings ; he remained silent for a few minutes, and then said :

"I am so glad I have seen it ; how I have longed to do so !"

"And you are not disappointed in your expectations?" the gentleman inquired.

"Oh, no, not at all; it is fine, it is beautiful, just what I had pictured to myself from what I have read, and seen in prints. But, sir, have you ever been there?"

"Frequently."

"Inside the Castle?"

"Yes, very often."

"And you have seen the Queen and Royal family?"

"I have."

Julian's eyes seemed to grow larger and larger as his wonder and curiosity increased. The stranger's countenance almost relaxed into something resembling a smile, as he watched the genuine simplicity and freshness of the boy's inquiring mind.

"Oh, sir," Julian persisted, "do tell me something about them. I do so wish to see the Queen, and the Princes and Princesses."

"You seem to be a very loyal subject, young gentleman," the stranger remarked.

"Yes, that I am, enthusiastically so," he replied. "I cannot tell you how I love the Queen, which is perhaps extraordinary, as I never saw her; but I hear of her, and all that I hear

makes me love and admire her more and more every day. I do so long to serve her in some way or another ; but what can I do ? Mr Vernon says the time may come."

The gentleman smiled again, but now with a sarcastic expression.

"Are we not near London?" exclaimed Julian, a new interest chasing the last, and he pulled out with some degree of ostentation a little watch with which his mother had that day presented him. It had been his father's.

"Five o'clock ! we shall soon be there," he said joyfully.

He did not look at his opposite neighbour, so engaged was he with his pleasant thoughts and the readjustment of his newly-acquired treasure, or he might have been struck, nay, even startled, by the singular manner with which the stranger fixed his eyes upon the little, rather shabby, watch, one which had been presented to his father on going first to school, when he was about the age of Julian. It was not, however, of a common description, but rather peculiar from being evidently of foreign manufacture, curiously chased on the outside, and a small chain and two little seals were suspended

from it. At that moment Violet, who had seen some object which attracted her wonder, called out in a loud voice :

“ Julian, Julian, come here ! ” and the boy quickly obeyed.

And now the train has reached the Paddington Station, and all is bustle and delightful confusion to the children. Julian does not bestow another glance upon the unprepossessing stranger, who, nevertheless, watches him with, one might almost say, an anxious and perturbed expression. A tall, powdered footman speedily puts his head into the carriage. Mrs Miller says, “ Yes, here we are, Thomas ! ” the door is opened, and they find themselves on the platform, jostled about in a manner which makes Violet cling to her young companion with rather a frightened air. However, soon, with Thomas’s assistance, Mrs Miller finds her boxes, which are all put into a cab, and the exulting *ci-devant* head-nurse, swelling with importance, is handed with her young companions into a carriage, upon whose panels is emblazoned a Marquis’s coronet. “ All right ! ” cries Thomas, and away they whirl.

The strange gentleman stands and watches

all this. "Wonderful!" he ejaculated, as he also entered his carriage, which was in waiting for him; and, to judge by his countenance, he seemed to carry away with him an additional "thorn in the flesh."

CHAPTER IX.

It was indeed a week of enjoyment to Julian, the one he spent in Whitehall Gardens ; and this period over, Lord Glenmore took upon himself the office of introducing his young *protégé* to the new life which was before him. It was not a very bright day, in any sense of the word, that on which Julian first entered Burleigh House, but the excitement of driving through the bustling streets of the city in some degree dispelled his sorrow at parting from his kind friends ; the sun, too, began to brighten the hitherto gloomy day, and his spirits revived with the usual elasticity of his age. But again his heart sank as the gates

opened, and, passing the porter's lodge, he looked for the first time on the gloomy pile; whilst, as the carriage drew up before the masters' house, he saw numbers of boys who were loitering about and staring at the new "gown boy" with scrutinizing, and perhaps supercilious, glances, for school boys have an inherent inclination to quiz all fresh comers.

He was courteously received by the headmaster, and the short examination which was necessary soon ended in a most satisfactory manner; for so pleased was the Doctor with Julian's proficiency, that he said he should be placed at once in the second form—a great triumph for one just entering the school.

"You have been well prepared, young gentleman. At what school have you been educated?"

"I never was at school," Julian answered, tears rising in his eyes when he thought of the kind friend who had done so much for him.

"Well," continued the Doctor, "whoever has taught you deserves the greatest credit."

And Julian went forth with a lightened heart and brightened eye.

How many have reason to bless the munificent founder, whose recumbent effigy, though placed in a dark corner, is the principal object of attraction in the chapel of Burleigh House !

Julian's interest and curiosity rose to the highest pitch the further he explored the wonders of the old place. After examining for a lengthened period every object of interest, Lord Glenmore, who had fully entered into all his pleasure in inspecting the ancient structure, was forced to remind him that the moment of parting was at hand.

They had, however, one other introduction to go through ; to the gown boys' matron, into whose hands Julian was finally to be delivered.

Those were the days when Mother K.—so she was generally and allowedly designated by the boys—held her genial sway over this portion of the establishment. And a mother truly might the good woman have been called, for maternal was she in her never-failing care towards every boy who was so fortunate as to be the object of her unwearying attention.

Lord Glenmore and Julian were ushered into a snug low room, not particularly bright-looking, with its only prospect from the

windows, the burial ground of the pensioners, but which soon lighted up into cheerfulness beneath the cheery influence of its occupant.

There sat the worthy woman, surrounded by heaps of worsted stockings, looking almost as round and soft as the balls of lambs-wool from which she was mending fractures innumerable.

“Well, my dear boy, so you are come at last!—we have been expecting you this week past,” was the cordial greeting given in a voice so truly kind that Julian’s heart felt immediately cheered.

“Now you must keep up your spirits,” she continued to say, as with experienced eye she soon read the expression of the boy’s countenance. “It will be a little strange and rough at first, but take my word for it, and I think I ought to know, you’ll be as merry as any of them this day fortnight; and if you are, as your kind friend there tells me, a good and studious boy, why, you’ll get on, and your life will be pleasant enough, I promise you.”

But even these kind words did not avail to check the tears which would start from Julian’s eyes as he bade farewell to the kind young Marquis.

It was, indeed, a very novel position for a boy never before separated from his home, and left with strangers; therefore we must excuse what the present *insouciant* race of school-boys might deem a spooney proceeding.

Lord Glenmore promised an early visit, and left his young friend, whom he really loved, with sincere regret.

“You shall drink tea with me this evening, dear boy,” Mrs K. said, “but now be off with Loftus, that tall man who has just put his head in at the door (this was meant for a small gown boy, who had half entered the room); he will take you about a little, he is a sharp one, I know; and then come back, and we will have a cozy cup of tea together.”

And soon Julian found himself in the midst of his future companions, enduring, as heroically as he might, the curious, and often impertinent, modes of reception to which a new boy is always subjected.

He did not, however, meet with anything peculiarly offensive to his feelings; there was something in his countenance and manners which disarmed the most ready to sting the sensitive heart of the uninitiated, and Julian returned to Mrs K. with brightened

spirits, and sat down to tea with good appetite.

Dear good woman ! how many there must be who remember her with unmixed feelings of gratitude and affection, whom her kindness has solaced, not only in sickness, but in sorrow and heaviness of heart ; how many a mother just parted from a beloved child has been comforted by the idea of her watchful care ; she was, indeed, the friend of all—masters, boys, all succumbed to her strong sense and clear views of everything ; all were strengthened to walk in the way they should go by the judicious advice of Mother K.

She had a soothing word for all—for the wayward boy, for the irritated master ; a hard rule was made gentler by her milder suggestion, and a hard heart softened by her persuasion. The epitaph which is to be found on an unostentatious tablet, erected by the scholars in the chapel of Burleigh House, is simply and beautifully illustrative of her character, when it says :

“She gave constant proof of the power which motherly kindness, combined with prudence, and directed by Christian principle, possesses, to win the love and respect of the young, and to prepare them to give ear to affectionate warning and earnest advice.

This tablet is erected,
As well in grateful remembrance
Of benefits conferred and kindness shown
To all under her care,
As for the sake of perpetuating
The name of
In the place which she most loved,
And in which she did so much good."

We think this genuine tribute of respect and affection to the memory of departed worth does credit to the hearts of those who dictated it.

Just a few words more, and we shall have done with Burleigh House for the present.

Julian's eyes, in wandering round the strange apartment, were attracted by a clock, of rather an unusual form, which stood on the chimney piece.

"Oh, you are looking at that!" Mrs K. exclaimed; "do you know it is one of the greatest treasures I possess,—shall I tell you why?" Julian was all attention.

"Well, once upon a time—many years ago—there was a boy here of the name of G. He was good and clever, and a universal favourite; but he was not strong, and this place was rather trying to him, for it was harder than it is now, when everything is what I call upon

cotton wool, in comparison. He was often very ill, poor boy, and very sorry, for he wanted to get on with his learning, and these fits of sickness kept him back sadly.

“I must say I loved G. dearly, he was a noble-hearted fellow ; but to cut a long story short—and I could go on for ever talking about him—he had a long illness just before he left Burleigh House, and I nursed him, as I am in duty bound to do (and that you will see, if you require it, young gentleman). Poor fellow, how he suffered, and how near death he was ! and, my dear boy, I can truly say, how fit he was to die. However, it was not so to be ; God willed that he should be spared. He recovered, and shortly after left us. When we parted, he said :

“ ‘Mother K., I shall remember you to the last hour of my life.’

“But many years passed, and we saw and heard very little of him.

“One day, it was a very foggy one, I remember, in December, I was sitting, as usual, in the midst of my stockings, thinking that there was scarcely light enough to see even those great big holes which you young gentlemen are so good as to make, in order to

keep me in full work from Monday till Saturday, when there was a loud knock at the door.

“Who can this be? thought I, and I stirred the fire, to throw a little light upon the subject. I soon heard a quick step, and the door opened, and there stood two persons, one a tall young man, and the other a young lady, so beautiful, it struck me she was like a ray of sunshine on that dark, gloomy day. The gentleman came straight up to me.

“‘Mother K.,’ he exclaimed, ‘have you forgotten me?’

“I stared, all confused at the handsome face which looked so anxiously and inquiringly into mine.

“‘Bless us, and save us!’ I soon cried, ‘is it not G.?’ And then followed such a greeting; had he been my own son he could not have been more affectionate; I can never forget how glad I was to see the dear boy once more, who had twined himself round my heart in so unaccountable a manner.

“And then he turned to the lady, and taking her hand, said:

“‘And, mother K., you must let me introduce you to my wife.’

“ ‘Your wife!’ I said, and I laughed; it seemed so strange to hear the lad, for as such I had always thought of him, talking of his wife.

“ ‘Yes, my wife!’ he said, as he put his arm lovingly round the young creature, ‘and a good one she is, I can assure you.’

“ ‘And a very pretty one, that I can see,’ said I. We soon got into most pleasant chat, and I began to think the wife was even worthy of her husband—the best praise I could give her!

“ And then G. got up and went out of the room, and returned, carrying rather a heavy case, which he put upon the table, and said to his wife:

“ ‘Now, darling, show Mother K. what you have brought for her.’

“ They opened the box between them, and placed that very clock upon the mantel-piece, from whence it has never been removed; nor ever will be, until I am dead.

“ ‘This is to remind you, dear Mother K., of the many hours you watched so patiently, so tenderly, by my side, when, had it not been for your great goodness, I should have been forlorn as well as suffering. Believe me when

I tell you, that the remembrance of all you have done for me has never quitted my mind. I have thought of it on many a sick bed, when I have had no one with me, in distant lands, and have longed for the kind hand and cheering voice which had so often strengthened and refreshed me in the midst of pain.'

"He said a great deal more ; and so did his sweet young wife ; but it would seem like glorifying myself if I repeated any more, although I have not forgotten one word ; and God knows that anything I was able to do for the dear young man was not only my duty to perform," added Mrs K. wiping her eyes, " but the greatest pleasure I ever had in all my work here. And it is so pleasant to be able to tell of this one proof of his grateful heart. Seldom, my dear, in this world do people remember kindnesses when they are done and over. It is all very well at the time, but the thankful feeling lasts only as long as the hoar frost under the influence of the sun—soon gone, and no trace left ; but that ought to make no difference to us. We must never weary in our work, however little encouragement we find ; and if, as in the story I have just told you, the bread cast upon the waters

does once perhaps in a life-time return to us, we ought only with grateful hearts to become the more diligent in our path of duty, however hard and troublesome it may sometimes be."*

* This story is not fiction.

CHAPTER X.

THE Marchioness of Glenmore seldom interfered in any of the amusements or fancies of her children; therefore it was fortunate that the Ladies Lyle were all naturally good and gentle, or with such unclipped wings there is no saying what flights they might have taken.

The present rage with them was little Violet. Her extreme beauty inspired the young ladies with such unbounded admiration, that they were never weary of loading her, not only with caresses, but dress of every description, and their great delight was showing her off in every possible manner. Every day she was equipped in some fanciful costume, to be displayed in

the Park, Kensington Gardens, or some public resort. No little princess could be more splendidly got up in all these fine clothes, so artistically arranged upon the beautiful little person by the hands of her scientific mother, every curl of that golden hair hanging just where it ought.

These were halcyon days to Mrs Miller; yes, halcyon days then, but oh, memory, what a stinging evil art thou too often! Yes, the memory not only of what we have done, but what we might at one time so easily have avoided, the memory of all the sorrow into which our own selfish folly has plunged another! This poor foolish mother—how gladly, proudly, she lent her assistance, by folly and vanity, to mar the happiness of a young life.

“Now, my pet,” she would say, “my beautiful darling,” when the finishing stroke had just been put to some elaborate toilette, “remember you behave yourself like a young lady.”

“But I’m not a young lady,” the child would pettishly exclaim, wearied by having to endure what was irksome to her—the long operation which her mother made of her dressing; “I’d much rather be with father at home.”

“You are a very naughty girl, and I have a

good mind to whip you," exclaimed the irritated Mrs Miller; "father, indeed! how vulgar that word sounds from you, with that lovely hat, that beautiful frock; never say that word again whilst you are in this house."

And then, seeing that the child was beginning to cry, Violet was petted and flattered, and coaxed into composure, and finally delivered over into the hands of her admiring young friends, who received her as if she were a beautiful doll, only created for their present amusement; and the poor little thing drank in, from all quarters, draughts of praise and adulation, which, for a wonder, made little impression upon her innocent mind.

Lord Victor returned from Brighton, looking so well, and in such good humour—no one to interfere with him now. He was most delighted to see Mrs Miller and Violet, who was ordered in the most peremptory manner by her mother never, on pain of a whipping, to mention Julian's name. The Marchioness had confided to the nurse the horror with which Victor remembered the boy, and thus commenced one of the first lessons of dissimulation which the mother thought fit to endeavour to teach her daughter.

"Now, darling, mind, you are to say you hate Julian, if Lord Victor asks you the question."

"But I love him very much, Mimmie," was the tearful reply.

"You provoking child!" was the answer. "Well, suppose you do, you need not say so."

"But I should tell a story, and father says that is wicked," persisted Violet.

"What can he know about it, I should like to know? I can tell you this, you naughty little thing, that if you vex Lord Victor I'll shut you up in a dark closet all night;—now don't you begin to cry and make a noise; be a good girl and do what I desire you, and all will be right."

Poor little wretched Violet! this is a specimen of the training she will have.

"Pray, young ladies," said Lord Glenmore one day to his sisters, after having been for some time silently watching Violet, who, dressed out with sashes and flounces, and every possible decoration, was giving herself the pretty little airs and graces of an embryo duchess, looking certainly most beautiful and refined—anything but like a blacksmith's daughter, "pray tell me, does it ever strike you that

you are acting very unwisely by that poor little child?"

"What do you mean?" asked Lady Violet, colouring slightly.

"Don't you think that it is very injudicious to bring her so completely out of her sphere, to dress her in this manner, and thus fill her head brim full with vanity?"

"That is so like you, Glenmore," said Lady Sophia, the second sister; "what an old-fashioned young man you are! Just as if it could hurt a child like that to have a pretty frock and sash—poor little thing, her fun will soon be over."

"The sooner the better, I think," replied the Marquis, seriously; "and I hope, for her sake, it will never be renewed. I have a great regard for Rose, and can never forget what I owe her for her attention to me when I was an ailing boy; but, dear woman, I don't think much of her sense, in any matters but those connected with the nursery department."

The young man had to undergo a regular attack from his three fair sisters, who were all up in arms to defend their favourite nurse, and to advocate the expediency of spoiling the child. As for Lord Victor, he had promised over and

over again to marry the pretty Violet as soon as he was a man ; and she, with some reluctance, had given her consent. This was only done in terror of her mother's threat of the dark closet ; for the little beauty never fancied the handsome boy lord, although he overwhelmed her with presents and attentions, and was her devoted slave.

It was many days before the child could reconcile herself to Julian's departure. She was really an affectionate little creature, loving with all her heart where she placed her affections. Upon her father she doted, and Julian shared equally in this love. Poor little girl, how sorry we are for her ! Would, indeed, that she had been a rough boy, the good, honest blacksmith's son, and not this fairy-like creature, this fatally beautiful daughter, whose story we have engaged to relate !

We may well imagine that Mrs Miller's journey homewards was not as triumphant as that which brought her on her holiday trip. She was in a very bad humour when Frank met her at the station to convey her home. He had done his best, poor man, to make everything comfortable for the "missus" on her return, but he and the maid had to bear not

a few ebullitions of ill temper, until time, which generally does its work, came to their relief, and she began to subside into her usual state of uncertain equanimity.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS HOPE felt more inclined to despond than she had done for years at the present moment; all seemed so dull and void without Julian.

Little Mary was a delicate child, quiet and undemonstrative in comparison with her vivacious brother, and not of an age to be much of a companion to her mother.

"This will never do!" mentally exclaimed Mrs Hope one morning, when, listless and pre-occupied, she endeavoured in vain to busy herself with her usual associations. "Come, Mary, let us go out; we shall both be the

better for a long walk this morning ; it will do you good, my pale darling."

But as she spoke the door burst open, and Sylvia rushed into the room, impatiently throwing herself into Mrs Hope's arms, sobbing and crying with vehement agitation.

"What is the matter, my dear child?" was the alarmed question.

"Oh I am so miserable, Mrs Hope, I could not bear it any longer ; so when Miss Wilkinson, who is so cross and unfeeling, left the room just now, I ran off, and never stopped till I found myself here ; I could not help it, I am so unhappy, I should like to die."

"My dear Sylvia, don't say such naughty things !" Mrs Hope exclaimed, but in a soothing tone of voice, as affectionately she encircled the panting, weeping girl with her arm, and made her sit by her side ; "we are all very sorry to part with Julian, but you know it is for his good, dear child, and if we love him, we must try to rejoice rather than lament."

"Rejoice ! don't talk so, Mrs Hope, I never could rejoice at losing Julian. Before he went, when I was in that dull school-room with that disagreeable Miss Wilkinson, whom nothing can

ever make me like, I used to think—well, soon I shall hear his step on the gravel walk, and I sat listening with my book on my knee, quite happy ; but now, no step, no voice,” and here her tears burst forth again ; “and papa looks so dull, and you, too, Mrs Hope, and even little Mary ; oh, what *are* we to do ?”

Mrs Hope would fain have mingled her tears with those of her little girl ; she could well have echoed those words, “What are we to do ?”—but she endeavoured to subdue her emotion ; and to comfort Sylvia she spoke of the future.

Oh, what should we do without the hope of the future ? so true are those hacknied words :

“Man never is, but always to be blest.”

Sylvia’s future was bright with youth and undimmed hopes ; so, soon the distant scene of happiness, pictured in so alluring a manner by her friend, dawned upon her imagination, the tears came less heavily from her eyes, whilst Mrs Hope talked of August, that blessed month when they might expect to see their dear boy again ; and Sylvia lifted up her head, which had been laid so wearily on her kind friend’s knee, and now, with smiles instead of tears, she was telling of plans for many a

scheme of enjoyment for the holidays, when again the door opened, and Miss Wilkinson appeared.

“Oh, you are here, Miss Vernon; it was what I expected; however, you will return with me immediately,” were the words she uttered, in a voice of great sternness.

Sylvia threw her arms again round Mrs Hope, exclaiming:

“Oh, don’t send me away, dear Mrs Hope; let me only remain this one day, and I will try to be good.”

But Mrs Hope saw by Miss Wilkinson’s countenance that there was nothing to be done but to obey. She would have been too glad to have kept the little girl until she had soothed her irritable feeling into a frame more calculated to enable her to bear the rule of her governess, which, Mrs Hope was quite aware, was not the most judicious for a child of Sylvia’s peculiar temperament.

After much painful altercation, the rector’s little daughter was taken away, and good Mrs Hope left to ponder with much concern over Sylvia’s disposition; something she plainly saw must be done for the child at this turning point of her character. She really loved her

dearly, this warm-hearted, impressible little creature! There was so much in her that was endearing, so much also to cause deep anxiety for the future; yet well pleased she felt, and half amused, when she thought of Sylvia's devotion to the boy Julian.

So do we often smile at the first appearance of some event, "no bigger than a man's hand, rising from the sea," and in this manner do we welcome circumstances trivial in appearance, but which are soon found to carry tempest in their hands.

Mr Vernon appeared at the farm the next morning with a troubled brow. Miss Wilkinson had given up her situation; Sylvia had been most unmanageable and naughty, and nothing would induce the governess to continue in a situation of which she declared she had long been weary, seeing plainly that she could be of no use to Miss Vernon.

What was now to be done?

Long was the conference held in Mrs Hope's sitting-room; little Mary had been sent out to take a long walk with the maid, and Mr Vernon requested that she might be left at the rectory to dine with Sylvia; so they were undisturbed.

When at length the rector departed, and the farmer's daughter stepped into the room to ask some questions, she found its usually calm occupant looking very much flushed, and evidently agitated; and little Mary, entering at the same time, was greeted with even more than usual tenderness by her mother, who, bending over her, whilst she drew the child upon her knee, endeavoured to conceal the tears which she evidently could not control.

"I wonder what is the matter with Mrs Hope," said Lucy Giles to her mother, when she rejoined her in the kitchen; "she looks so queer and sad."

"Oh, I suppose they have been talking over Master Julian; the rector is as soft about him as his mother, I think," returned Mrs Giles.

No wonder that Mrs Hope looked flushed and agitated, after the startling disclosure that had been made to her of the long-standing attachment of Mr Vernon, and the offer of his hand and heart.

"It is some years since I became aware of my love for you, dear Mrs Hope, but I have not dared to tell you this before," were the words with which Mr Vernon commenced the communication. "I knew well that the wounds

of your heart were long in healing, and I loved you the better for your constancy to the memory of the departed ; but now that years have gone by, I venture to ask you to look around, and see how many you will benefit by becoming my wife. As for myself, I need not dwell upon my feelings of rejoicing ; indeed, they would be too great for expression. But our children ; would they not all be the happier if we made one family ?—you, the mother of my little daughter, and I, the father of your dear children—of Julian, whom already I love so truly ; yes, dear Mrs Hope, only say you will make my home a blessed nest of peace and love, and how grateful I shall feel.”

Poor Mrs Hope ! how could she answer this appeal ? It was so wholly unexpected ; never for a moment had she contemplated the possibility of such an event as a second marriage. She, the humble widow, despised, and utterly rejected by the relations of her first husband ; esteeming herself so lowly, never thinking to raise her eyes but with feelings of gratitude and respectful admiration towards one she deemed so superior. And then again, the memory of her husband ! was it not as vivid as ever upon her heart ? Man’s nature is so dif-

ferent to woman's ; his feelings lead him forth to the battle and struggle of the world ; and though he may sorrow for a time, sincerely, painfully, yet still he is an active being ; he can dissipate his thoughts by business and amusement ; he can shift the scene at will, and thus blunt the edge of grief. But woman, she nurses her sorrow, considers it profanation not to keep alive its remembrance. Mrs Hope's first impulse was to reject the idea with repugnance.

“ Oh, dear sir, you don't really mean what you say ! ” she exclaimed, pale and agitated. “ You forget how far I am beneath you in every way ; that I have already brought disgrace and misery into one family ; that—”

But she was interrupted by Mr Vernon : “ I repeat what I have before said, dear Mrs Hope, that I shall feel proud, as well as blessed beyond expression, if you will accept me as your husband. You have formed a very false estimate of your merits, if you consider yourself beneath me, or any one in this world ; you little know with what admiration your conduct is viewed by every one—how you are loved and respected by all who know you.”

Mrs Hope was silently shedding the tears

she could not restrain ; she saw before her this excellent man, this friend, who, in her bitterest days of adversity, had been her consolation, her support, whom she so truly revered and loved as her enlightened pastor, the kind strengthener of her sinking faith, in the dark hour of mental and bodily prostration ; and then, what had he not done for Julian, her darling boy ? Oh ! with what gratitude this thought filled her heart.

“ And now he asks me to be his wife—asks it, too, as a *favour* from me—oh, what can I do ? ”

She sat leaning her head on her hand in agonizing deliberation.

“ If Julian were here he would plead my cause, I am sure,” Mr Vernon said with gentle, persuasive earnestness.

These words seemed to vibrate upon the right chord.

“ Would he ? ” she exclaimed, and looked up through her tears.

“ I am quite sure he would.”

Still no answer from Mrs Hope, who again covered her face with her hands, and sat in the most desponding attitude.

Mr Vernon looked at her anxiously for a few moments, and then spoke :

“ I do not wish to hurry you, my dear lady ; I know well what is passing in your mind, and I only the more admire and reverence you for the feelings which are struggling there ; but I have something to propose. I know you have ever made Julian your friend, your counsellor ; write to him, tell him all, and see what he says, before you give me a decisive answer.”

“ Oh, ever kind and good ! ” exclaimed Mrs Hope, gratefully.

“ Will you do this, my beloved Mrs Hope ? ” was the rector’s earnest demand.

And the promise was given. The next day she would write to Julian ; and after a sleepless night of deliberation, she penned these few lines :

“ Woodleigh Farm,

“ April, —

“ My own dear boy,

“ Mr Vernon has asked me to be his wife ; he wishes me to be a mother to Sylvia, and himself to become a father to you and little Mary. I could not give him an answer till I had heard from you. You have ever been a friend to me, dear Julian, as well as an affectionate son ; I can rely upon your good sense and discretion.

Tell me exactly what you think and feel upon this all-important subject. Your beloved father, Julian, his memory is as fresh and dear to me as ever! The idea of a second marriage has agitated me dreadfully, though I am quite aware of the goodness of our most kind friend, Mr Vernon, and feel overwhelmed with gratitude for this last proof of his consideration for me. Write immediately, and believe me

“Your most affectionate mother,

“MARY HOPE.”

It was, fortunately, a half-holiday, and Julian received this letter by the second delivery, or his studies might have been but imperfectly performed. Brightly flashed his eyes, and he seemed treading upon air as he rushed across the court-yard to seat himself at his desk to write his reply. It ran as follows :

“Dearest, darling mother,

“I am so very happy—what a fortunate boy I am! Everything turns out for my good, and now my only sorrow will be gone, that of thinking of you forlorn and alone. Mr Vernon my second father! I cannot believe in such

happiness ! You ask me what I think and feel upon the subject ; I will tell you at once. I am sure if my own dear father could send you a message from heaven, he would say, ‘My darling Mary, marry that good man ; I rejoice that you should have such a friend and protector to assist you in all your troubles, and to help you to take care of my children.’ There is not such another man *in the world* as Mr Vernon. Tell him that I will be his most dutiful and affectionate son, and do you also tell him, darling mother, that you will be his most dutiful and affectionate wife. Excuse this scrawl and all mistakes ; I am wild with joy, I hardly know how to contain myself. How delightful ! Sylvia my sister ! tell her that we will begin the new flower-garden as soon as I come home ; oh, we shall be so happy !

“ From, darling mother,

“ Your affectionate son,

“ JULIAN HOPE.”

“ Papa wants to know if you have heard from Julian to-day, Mrs Hope,” said Sylvia, as she flew into the room the morning this letter had arrived at the farm.

Mrs Hope, looking very pale and grave, im-

mediately put the letter into an envelope, which, having sealed, she handed to Miss Wilkinson to deliver to Mr Vernon.

Her answer was thus given in Julian's words.

CHAPTER XII.

A **SPLENDID** domain is that of Lilford Towers. The mansion is a true specimen of the Elizabethan style,—grand and gloomy; the projection in the centre forming at once porch and tower, and the two wings, supported by pillars, giving great decision of effect to its appearance. There is a fine entrance hall and splendid library, extending nearly the whole length of one wing, commanding views of the gardens, which are very beautiful.

Altogether, it is a most interesting old pile; the hand of wealth preserving every part in right good keeping, the exterior corresponding beautifully with the interior.

Lilford Towers was, in fact, a real specimen of one of the lordly homes of England, telling of a long line of ancestry, and abundance of means to maintain the family honours. And yet the possessor of this truly baronial mansion was but a private individual of no rank, save that of gentleman. It had been whispered that had he been on the right side of politics, a peerage would long since have been offered him ; and then again it was said that the proud owner of Lilford Towers had declared that on no consideration would he ever accept a seat in the House of Lords.

It is on a beautiful summer's day that we take a survey of the interior of one of the finest libraries in England.

In the embrasure of one of the oriel windows a young man is extended upon a peculiarly constructed sofa. His countenance indicates settled ill health, and a ray of bright sunshine falling upon his figure plainly reveals the person of a deformed cripple.

He has a low table by his side, on which are placed books, papers, and writing materials. At this moment he has a Times newspaper in his hands.

"Father !" a low voice exclaimed, address-

ing a gentleman who was writing in a distant part of the next room, "who can this be, I wonder? can it be the widow of my uncle Julian?"

The gentleman thus addressed raised a stern countenance at the speech, and said:

"To what do you allude, Jerrold?"

"I will read it to you," was the answer.

"On the 12th inst. at Brooklands, —shire, the Rev. Arthur Vernon, rector of Brooklands, to Mary, relict of the late Rev. Julian Hope."

"I had no idea till lately that my uncle's widow was alive; are there any children, and why, my dear sir, have you so completely lost sight of the family?" the young man persisted.

Mr Hope evidently winced at these inquiries, and his face became still more gloomy in its expression. He did not immediately reply. A young, fair face, the living image of a brother, not only dead, but who he felt had been most severely treated, had come hauntingly before his vision, and left a troubled impression on his mind, which he had in vain tried to shake off.

"Yes," he mused, "there can be no doubt that boy must have been Julian's,"

This he had thought and wondered over very often.

“But the boy looked so well to do, so carefully dressed, so free and gentleman-like in his bearing; no sign of poverty or neglect about him.”

Perhaps this might have been a relief to the conscience of this hard man, or to his family pride; and then that coroneted carriage in which he took his seat, certainly as no servile intruder, but with the perfect ease of a well-born, well-bred youth.

Oh, human nature, how ignoble are thy innate tendencies; how generally do we see even the wise, the exalted, influenced in their feelings by the pride of circumstances, the trappings of exterior adornment, the omnipotence of good looks—yes, how heavily do they weigh on the balance of opinion!

Had that proud man seen his nephew issue from a third-class carriage, with coarse ill-made clothes; accompanied by vulgar associates, taking his place in an omnibus, instead of entering that aristocratic conveyance—what place in his uncle’s memory would the poor boy have obtained?

“You have not answered my question,” re-

peated the cripple, rather querulously. "Do you think this is my uncle Julian's widow, and how many children did he leave?"

"I believe there was a boy and a posthumous child," Mr Hope answered, with evident reluctance in his tone; "but perhaps you are not aware of the circumstances of the case, and what a painful subject the whole affair has been to the family?"

"Oh! yes, I know all about it, but my uncle is dead, and there is an end of him and his sins. What have his children to do with them? Certainly they are visited upon them with a vengeance in this case, if what I heard is true."

"And may I ask what you have heard?" his father fearlessly replied.

"It is this—that my uncle married beneath him certainly, but his wife was a most lovely, accomplished person: this strikes me as scarcely a sufficient crime to authorize the family casting him off for ever, and leaving him to die in poverty."

"Jerrold, you are speaking in a most improper manner to your father," Mr Hope answered, but with far less sternness than he would have assumed in speaking to

any one else, for his crippled son was the only being who had ever touched a chord of softness in his heart. "Perhaps you do not know that your uncle's conduct broke my mother's heart."

"My poor uncle, how I pity him!" was Jerrold's answer. "What he must have suffered, and his wife, who I hear was so gentle and good. My grandmother had been ill for years, I know, with a heart complaint; surely it is more than cruel to lay all the blame of her death upon her unfortunate son."

"Pray, where have you gained all this information, which seems so greatly to have excited your interest?" Mr Hope inquired.

Jerrold Hope was silent, but on his father repeating the question, he said:

"Well, the truth is, you know I am amusing myself, now this picture cleaner is here, by looking over all the pictures and portraits stowed away in different parts of the house. I made them wheel my chair into the north turret, where I heard there was a room full of various portraits, and spent a whole morning looking over its contents. Martha was with me, and assisted me much by telling me the names of the different subjects."

"And she, I suppose, was your informant

concerning the family history, which would have been as well allowed to rest for ever."

"Pardon me, sir," exclaimed the young man, indignantly, "I think you are wrong in saying this."

The father's haughty brow contracted with a still sterner frown; he was about to speak, but controlled himself; his eyes fell upon the form of his son, the only creature he had ever loved, and he checked the bitter words which had risen to his lips.

"Shall I go on, and tell you how I came to feel all this interest about my uncle?" Jerrold inquired.

"Oh! yes, say on!" was his father's answer, in a cold, constrained tone of voice. And Jerrold proceeded:

"Well, amongst the pictures there were two at the very extremity of the large room, placed seemingly quite out of the way, with their faces turned against the wall. I had looked at all the others, and was just about to be wheeled out, when my eye fell upon them; I desired the servant to bring one of them to me. The evening sun was streaming brightly into the apartment, and it was with a sensation I cannot describe that I looked upon a face I could

never forget, although it was years since I had last seen it, and then I must have been quite a child. A beam from the setting sun lighted up the whole countenance, and a smile so serene, so heavenly, greeted my sight ; I felt the tears start to my eyes whilst I looked upon it, and my emotion seemed contagious, for soon I heard a sob, and turning round, I saw that Martha was weeping bitterly.

“ ‘Poor dear Mr Julian !’ she said. ‘Yes, I remember well when that was painted, just before he went to college for the first time, and so pleased and happy he was ; so determined to do well and distinguish himself. I recollect his every word, dear boy, the morning he left this house for Oxford, whilst he was packing up his clothes ; so hopefully he spoke—such bright and happy prospects in view—so loved and petted—and then in so short a time so completely cut off and forgotten.’

“We were both silent for some moments, mournfully gazing upon this interesting picture ; the face so speaking in its expression, one might have imagined that it said : ‘Weep not for me, I am happy now, far beyond the reach of human sorrow.’ The other—”

“I have had enough of this, Jerrold,” his

father said, at the same time rising to leave the room ; “ you are quite aware that I allow more from you than any other living creature, but even you can strain a point too far ; remember, let me hear no more upon the subject—I desire.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“So I hear the Marquis is at the Court,” said Mrs Higgins, who had bustled into Mrs Miller’s parlour to communicate the news, with which she was brim-full. “Mrs Evans is in a pretty fuss; she only knew by this morning’s post my Lord was to be there in a few hours. He only stays a day or two, I hear.”

“Oh,” said Mrs Miller, looking offended, “it is a strange thing they did not let *me* know. Violet, come here, let me do your hair. What a figure you look! His Lordship is sure to come here before any other place.”

But Mrs Miller was disappointed. Lord Glenmore, she soon heard, by means of her

maid-servant, had gone to the rectory, and there he seemed to remain, for nothing more was heard of him that day. Mrs Miller was in a terrible state of fume and fuss. "Very odd!" she cogitated, "no message, no present from the young ladies. Lady Violet never forgets me; and she had half promised to send me a new summer dress, and the light silk she had worn so little, and which would cut up so well for Violet; and no little present from Lord Victor for the child! Things are coming to a pretty pass!" she at length ejaculated, "if any of the family are to come here without remembering *me*, and after all I have done for the children, early and late, up and down," &c. &c.

This was not to be borne—she must go to the Court and see how matters stood—whether there was any parcel for her in his Lordship's portmanteau, and that she might cross-question the valet; but no valet had accompanied his Lordship. Lord Glenmore had absolutely come down alone, with a single carpet-bag containing shirts, indicating the shortest possible stay. Something surely must be in the wind—but what? Poor Mrs Miller, what a day she spent!

With Violet dressed in her best, she sallied

forth and skirted the rectory, hoping, at least, to see something of Miss Sylvia; but no Sylvia was in sight. She thought she would try the farm; but there she heard that Mrs Hope was particularly engaged, and could see no one that day. Mrs Giles and her daughter, she was quite sure, had a sort of queer look upon their countenances when they talked to her.

“Just as if anybody could humbug me!” she murmured. “Well,” at last she thought, “I dare say Julian has got into some scrape, and my Lord has come down to tell his mother;” and quite relieved in mind, Mrs Miller trudged homewards.

Not that she wished any harm to the boy—and yet the human mind is such a queer piece of mechanism, that often do we observe a certain degree of morbid satisfaction in people—which nothing would, however, tempt them to confess—on hearing of some astounding misfortune having happened to their friend or neighbour. This does not always arise out of hard-heartedness or want of sympathy; the kindest and most compassionate are alike subject to this contradictory feeling; and we can only ascribe it to that craving for excite-

ment which is, more or less, inherent in all our natures.

"Well, this is a pretty business about Julian!" Mrs Miller said to her husband when he came home to his tea.

"What's the matter?" Frank asked.

"Oh, of course, he is either ill, or has got into some hobble. You know the Marquis has arrived, and been closeted with the rector all day; the Gileses look dumb-founded, and it can be nothing but that. I am really very sorry; however, I suppose Julian is just like all boys, not such a saint after all."

Frank Miller looked very grave.

"Well, I hope it's not that, missus; I trust he is not ill; as for getting into a scrape, he will never do anything to disgrace himself, that I'll warrant."

"Yes, I know you are very wise; your experience of the world in general is so much greater than mine," remarked Mrs Miller, sneeringly.

"Well, at any rate, I know that Master Julian is every inch a gentleman; and no one need be afraid of his doing anything to forfeit that character."

And honest Frank, feeling he was waxing

wroth, and would have to bear a volley of provocations, drank up his tea, and left the house.

The blacksmith's family were assembled at breakfast the next morning; Mrs Miller still not in the best of tempers—this visit of the Marquis rankling in her mind—when they were startled by the unexpected sound of the church-bells ringing out a merry peal. "What's all this?" was the exclamation of Mrs Miller; "who's married, I wonder? Upon my word they make uproar enough; do step out, Frank, and inquire; or, Susan, do you go," to the servant girl.

But they were saved all further suspense; two women burst into the house, one, our favourite gossip, Mrs Higgins.

"Well, Mrs Miller, and who do you think is married?" they exclaimed, breathless with excitement.

"How should I know?"

Well, guess; the most unaccountable thing in the world."

"What, the Marquis, is it?"

"No, guess again."

"I can't, so don't be so aggravating, but tell at once," exclaimed Mrs Miller.

“What do you think of its being our rector and Mrs Hope?”

Mrs Miller sat down, and really turned so white she looked as if she were going to faint.

“Well, what *do* you think of this news?” the women inquired.

Mrs Miller could not speak, the surprise had really agitated her; but Frank Miller exclaimed, “Hurrah! I have not heard a bit of news that has pleased me so much for many a day; Mrs Hope is a good lady, and the rector will be a happy man. This is why the Marquis came down, not to tell them any ill of Master Julian.”

And Frank Miller hastily made his exit to hear more of the news.

“Well,” said Mrs Miller, as soon as she could command herself to speak, “I think this beats anything I ever heard; if there ever was a sly proceeding, here it is; never to tell me a word about it—I who have been like a mother, or rather a sister, to that senseless thing. A pretty rise for her indeed! and fine airs she’ll give herself. I have seen a change coming on for the last year or two, a sort of condescending manner, as if she was much better than I, forsooth!”

“ Well, Mrs Miller, she was always a lady, you know, though a poor one ; her first husband was a clergyman, and his family mighty grand, I hear.”

“ Mrs Higgins,” said the *ci-devant* nurse with offended dignity, “ you will allow me, if you please, to know what constitutes a lady. I, who have lived with ladies all my life—never associated with any other.”

“ Well, you’ll never make out, notwithstanding, that Mrs Hope, or rather Mrs Vernon, is not a lady ; at least, she has always behaved *as sich* ; and manners make the woman as well as the man.”

And Mrs Higgins was about to depart in dudgeon, when Mrs Miller, having not half satisfied her curiosity, said, changing her voice into a friendly tone :

“ Come, neighbour, though it is so early, we may as well drink the health of the new married couple.”

Then a tempting-looking bottle was brought forth, and Violet having been ordered to go into the garden, the two gossip-loving souls sat down comfortably to enjoy the delights of an unrestrained chat whilst discussing something good.

“Well now, Mrs Higgins, tell me all about this singular affair.”

“The way I came to know about it was this,” commenced the narrative. “My husband, coming home to breakfast rather earlier than usual, it was not later than half-past seven, met the Marquis; my Lord stopped and spoke a few words to him, giving him a message concerning some plants the ladies had told him to send. He seemed in a hurry, and soon walked on. My husband followed him at a distance, his way being the same as that my Lord was taking. When he got to the church, there the Marquis stopped, and opened the gate and walked straight in. My husband, good, simple soul that he is, says he should not have thought much of that, had he not at the same time seen our rector issue from the church holding Miss Sylvia, dressed as pretty as possible, by the hand. Joe began to think things looked queer, and, instead of walking on, stopped a bit, looking over the churchyard wall, hidden from sight by the big yew tree. Well, there was a great deal of shaking of hands; the rector looking very smiling and pleased, and Miss Sylvia jumping about and laughing so merrily. They all walked up and down the path lead- —

ing to the gate, several times, looking out anxiously as if they were expecting something. My old man began to feel all in a flutter—‘somehow as you would have been, Sally, had you been in my place,’ he said, grinning from ear to ear.

“ ‘No wonder,’ says I.

“ Well, presently he saw a carriage coming. It was a fly from A—. It stopped at the church gate. The Marquis opened the door at once, before Farmer Giles, who was on the box, could assist him, and handed out a lady.

“ At first Joe did not know who it was, never having seen Mrs Hope dressed in anything but black ; but he guessed it was she, as little Miss Mary was lifted out, and then came Mrs Giles and her daughter. The Marquis took Mrs Hope under his arm, Miss Sylvia ran up to Miss Mary and led her by the hand, first having kissed her very lovingly, and the whole party walked to the church, into which Mr Vernon had before gone, followed by Mr Smith, the curate.

“ Well, now, I always says it, and will say it to the end of my life, Joe Higgins is the best and kindest husband that ever stepped. I was just a-boiling the coffee when in he rushed.

“ ‘Sally!’ says he, ‘come along and see a sight which will make your eyes start out of your head; come quick, or you will lose it.’

“ ‘Are you out of your mind, Joe?’ says I.

“ ‘Come along,’ he cried, and he pulls me out, and drags me along, till we reaches the wall of the churchyard.

“ ‘What in the world is all this?’ I said.

“ ‘Stop a bit and you will see,’ he answered; and sure enough I did see.

“First came Mr Vernon’s carriage, driving up to the gate with post-horses, all ready packed for a journey. Thomas all gaitered and great-coated, as if it was the depth of winter.

“ ‘Well, Joe, what next?’ says I.

“ ‘Wait a bit,’ was again his answer.

“And I had not long to wait. Out of the church soon came our rector, Mrs Hope leaning on his arm, followed by my Lord, leading by each hand Miss Sylvia and Miss Mary; then Mrs Giles and her daughter, then Mr Giles and the curate.”

“Well, and how did Mrs Hope look, and what was her dress?” Mrs Miller, with much inquisitive interest, inquired.

“I can hardly tell you; I was so taken all

of a heap ; but she looked the lady all over, in her grey silk, and straw bonnet. She was not at all fine, but just as a lady ought to be when she is going a journey. When they came to the gate, Mrs Vernon crying sadly, I heard her say to Mrs Giles, ‘ You will take care of Mary till I return ; ’ and Mrs Giles cried too, and so did her daughter, silly bodies !—but Miss Sylvia tripped about like a little bird, and kissing her new mother, said, ‘ I shall soon see you again, dear, dear mamma ! ’ and the Marquis smiled, and looked so pleased.

“ In no time Mrs Vernon was helped into the carriage, the rector jumped in after her, and they were off ; and at that moment the church clock struck eight o’clock. I call this doing things snug, don’t you, Mrs Miller ? ”

“ I call it a sly, shamefaced proceeding,” remarked Mrs Miller, indignantly.


“ No one knew a word about it,” continued Mrs Higgins, “ not even the clerk, till just as he was going to bed last night, and then he only heard that there was to be a wedding at half-past seven the next morning. I hear Miss Sylvia and her maid are to go off with my Lord to London by the twelve o’clock train, and Mr and Mrs Vernon meet them there in

a week, when they are to go to visit the Marchioness."

Poor Mrs Miller: she really was an object of pity that day: she was suffering from that painful sensation of uneasiness, that most gnawing of diseases, *anxieté*!

Before long, however, the ruffled feathers were smoothed, by a visit from Lord Glenmore, bringing with him a hurried note from Lady Violet: in which she said her brother had set off so suddenly for the Court, that she had not time to send what she intended to her dear nurse, but that a box would soon arrive for her. Thus mollified, Mrs Miller softened the rigidity of the manner she had assumed on first seeing the young Marquis, who, perfectly understanding how matters stood, began good-naturedly to explain the state of the case, and to say how anxious Mrs Hope had been that her marriage should not be talked about in the village.

"You may imagine, Rose, how completely it has been kept a secret from every one, when I tell you that even my sisters were not informed of it till after I left London. Only to my mother was it communicated. We are all much pleased; Mr Vernon will have a delightful wife, and an excellent mother for that madcap Sylvia."



"A grand thing, certainly, for *her!*" was Mrs Miller's rather scornful answer.

But again a soother arrived in the shape of a large piece of wedding-cake, accompanied by a letter from Mrs Hope, in which she expressed herself most kindly, saying that she should never forget all the friendly attention she and her children had received from Mrs Miller, and begging her acceptance of a pretty brooch, in which was a lock of Julian's and Mary's hair.

"She certainly *is* a lady, and no mistake, and I am glad the rector has married her," was now the burden of the nurse's song. What trifles serve to heal some self-inflicted wounds! A judicious word, a kind look, a little forethought and trouble, will often disarm even envy of its most painful sting!

* * . * * *

Julian's letter to his mother had decided her to accept Mr Vernon's most flattering proposal. She saw, plainly, the life of happiness and usefulness opened before her; still, had it not been for those words in her boy's letter, she thought she could scarcely have made up her mind to a step which appeared so formidable; she, who had been accustomed to years of seclusion, how could she take her

place as the wife of Mr Vernon, and fulfil the duties of the station of life in which he moved? But, as we have said, Julian's letter decided her. "If my own dear father could send you a message from Heaven, he would say, 'My darling Mary, marry that good man; I rejoice that you should have such a friend, such a protector to assist you in all your troubles, and to help to take care of my children.'" It was courage that she lacked to encounter so new a position, and her son strengthened and determined her by the view he had taken of the case.

Mr Vernon quite entered into her wishes that the affair should be kept perfectly secret, and every preparation was made in the most private manner; Lady Glenmore, to whom the event was confided, assisting most kindly in choosing a suitable *trousseau* for the bride elect.

Mr Vernon was a man of good family and fortune, independent in every way, with no one to consult as to the expediency of any of his proceedings. Mrs Hope, the widow of a man of high family, thoroughly lady-like in manners and appearance, he felt he could introduce with much satisfaction to his family.

Sylvia's mother was the daughter of Lady Sylvia Trelawny. She had a fortune of her own, which had been settled on her children after the death of their father ; and besides this portion, secured to the only child of the marriage, Sylvia had been left by her grandmother the sum of twenty thousand pounds ; so the little lady was quite an heiress. We may imagine the feelings which agitated the widow when, on the wedding day, she found herself in the churchyard which contained the remains of her husband, whose memory she must ever love so well. It was a bright, beautiful morning ; all nature seemed to be rejoicing in calm, happy repose ; there was a cheerful light on every object, a genial feeling in every breeze of summer air, reviving to the most drooping spirit.

“ If my own dear father could send you a message from Heaven,” Mrs Hope kept repeating to herself over and over again ; but she dared not lift her eyes, lest they should encounter one object—which she knew must shake her fortitude ; so, resolutely, she looked neither to the right nor left till all was over, and she was seated by Mr Vernon's side in the carriage, and then she leaned out of the win-

dow, and her gaze sought a well-known spot, a grave railed round, on which a bright ray of sunshine was resting. There was an inward prayer ascending from her heart to Heaven ; and then she turned and placed her hand in that of her husband.

CHAPTER XIV.

LITTLE MARY was left under the care of Mrs Giles, but Sylvia had been invited by Lady Glenmore to pay a visit in Whitehall Gardens. Mr Vernon had not ventured to communicate this delightful prospect to the little girl until the morning of his marriage, when he disclosed the two events; and the unbounded raptures she evinced at hearing that Mrs Hope was to become her mother at first quite superseded the happiness, which soon she allowed herself to feel, at the idea of the London expedition.

“ Oh, Mary, my own little sister ! ” she said, as she dragged the child after her to

the rectory, "we shall have such fun,—you are coming to live here with your—I mean *our* mamma, and Julian will always spend his holidays with us ; are you not very, *very* happy to have my papa for yours also?"

But Mary was anything but happy at that moment. She had never been separated from her mother for a day ; and the idea of her absence for a few weeks was appalling to her. She did nothing but weep and lament, whilst the vivacious Sylvia rushed about in a state of great excitement and joy, longing for the moment when Lord Glenmore would call for her and her attendant.

Miss Wilkinson had left the rectory only a few days previous to these events ; and it was Mr Vernon's intention to bring back with them a good foreign governess, as Mrs Vernon had insisted on undertaking the English part of the education of her two little daughters.

Sylvia was received most kindly by her friends in Whitehall Gardens, and was soon perfectly at home in her new quarters.

She was an attractive-looking little girl, with a countenance whose animation would have been sufficient, even without beauty.

But she promised to be very pretty, as well as *espiègle* in her appearance. At the present time there was a want of repose in her expression, at her age signifying very little; but a thoughtful observer would have felt inclined to hope, while observing the lively child, that her character would soften and calm down as age and reflection advanced.

Sylvia's only wish left ungratified by her indulgent friends was that she might immediately visit Julian.

“Why may I not go and see him, my dear Lady Glenmore?” she coaxingly asked. “To be so near *my brother*,” she added, with proud emphasis, “and not to go to him is so cruel; do, do let me set off. I can go in a cab; now pray let me, good, kind Lady Glenmore.”

Lady Glenmore was obliged to say, no. Indulgent as she was, she longed to gratify the child. But she had promised Mr and Mrs Vernon that the visit should be deferred until they arrived; she did not like to disobey orders, and was therefore obliged to withstand the entreaties and even tears of Sylvia.

“What a fuss you make about that stupid Julian!” said Lord Victor one morning when

Sylvia was indulging in lamentations at not being allowed to visit him.

Sylvia's eyes flashed fire, and the colour mounted violently to her face.

"How dare you talk in that manner of my brother?" exclaimed the enraged little lady. "That stupid Julian indeed! Pray what do you think you are then, I should like to know?"

"I," the boy answered, with haughty scorn, "what am I? I can soon tell you; *I* am Lord Victor Lyle."

"And does that make you one bit better than Julian? Does it make you as clever, as good, as noble?—you, a poor ignorant, naughty boy—you—"

But here Sylvia was interrupted by the governess, who came forward and said:

"Miss Vernon, I cannot allow this quarrelling; and, Lord Victor, I am quite ashamed of you; you ought to remember this young lady is your sisters' friend, a guest in this house; and you ought not to insult her by saying rude things of her brother."

"But I do hate him, and I hate her now, and always shall. Her brother indeed! a pretty brother—a beggar boy the other day!"

Sylvia's wrath now rose to so violent a pitch it was fortunate that a burst of tears in a degree relieved her; we cannot answer for what might have been the consequence, for she looked ready to spring upon her foe, and use without relenting all those weapons with which Nature had supplied her, in defence of her beloved Julian. But at that moment, most fortunately, Lord Glenmore appeared. He had come to propose some party of amusement to the young people. He was surprised to see the perturbed state of the school-room; and on hearing the cause of it, immediately took Lord Victor by the hand and led him out of the room.

And then Sylvia was overwhelmed with the sympathy of the young ladies, who were almost as angry as she was, at the spiteful words which the disagreeable boy had levelled against their favourite Julian. Sylvia was not easily pacified; she had been wounded in the most vulnerable part, and had never learnt to govern either her fancies or her temper. Mr Vernon, excellent and good as he was, had not been wise or judicious in his treatment of his child. He had indulged her in all her baby wants and wishes, and was aided in this course of

spoiling by a nurse who remained with Sylvia until within the last few years, when, fortunately, she was obliged to leave her, and her place was supplied by a more judicious attendant. She required gentle but firm guidance, association with refined minds, to make her the delightful character which hers might well be when the ignorance and presumption of a spoilt child were annihilated.

* * * * *

Lord Victor was taken by his brother to his own apartment. He had a foreign nursery-governess, partly his attendant, and, in a degree, his instructress.

Lord Glenmore informed Mademoiselle that the boy had behaved so ill that he desired he might not leave his room that day. Lady Glenmore was much distressed when her son communicated to her Victor's disgrace.

"The fact is, mother, that boy ought to have been sent to school long ago."

"Really, Glenmore, you are too severe upon that darling; you know that he is to go next year to the juvenile school at Eton."

"Yes, and in the mean time he will be past enduring. My sisters are always complaining of his self-will and insolence; Miss Lennard

will scarcely allow him to enter her school-room. I am sure I don't know what is to be done with him, he destroys all the pleasure of the house."

Poor Lady Glenmore ! she well knew how true all this was ; yet still her heart bled for her darling ; she was sadly weak where he was concerned, but she never ventured to oppose the will of her eldest son, on whose good sense and discretion she fully relied.

In the mean time, Victor was in durance vile, all his worst feelings rising with violence in his young heart.

Mademoiselle had left her charge for a short time, to receive a visit from a friend in some room down-stairs, when Tom Jones, the trusty confidant of the little Lord, having discovered by the countermanding of the ponies that something was wrong, and hearing from one of the housemaids that Lord Victor was alone, made his way to the captive's door.

" I say, my little Lord, what's in the wind ? " was his familiar greeting.

And then the history of his woes was poured into the ears of the young groom, no words too strong to testify his detestation of Julian

and all belonging to him ; Sylvia coming in for a full share of his denunciations.

“ I tell you what, I have a bit of advice to give you—let us cut our sticks and run,” said Tom.

“ What do you mean ? ” asked Victor.

“ Why haven’t you told me over and over again that Mrs Miller wants you to come to the Court, that you might be with her from morning to night. Just ask your mamma to let you and I go down there, ponies and all, for a bit ; we can pop them into the railway as snug as anything, and then what fun we should have ! Your Mamselle here we could easily manage, she’s not a strict one, and how jolly you would be with Madame Miller and pretty Violet ! Hey, my Lord ? ”

And here the vulgar groom winked his eye most knowingly.

“ Oh, how I should like it ! ” exclaimed the boy.

“ Yes,” and you would get away from those stiff people who are coming, the parson and his wife. Lawks, it makes me shudder to think of it ! and nothing going down but that Julian.”

“ I *will* go, Tom, that I am determined,”

shouted Victor, clenching his fists with an expression terrible on the countenance of a child.

And he did go. Victor assailed his mother with coaxings, entreaties, and at length, tears ; and Lord Glenmore, who really saw the expediency of getting rid of the boy at the present juncture, at length consented.

So the little Lord and his suite, consisting of Mademoiselle, Tom Jones, and the ponies, were despatched without loss of time to the Court ; Mrs Miller having received orders to watch over the precious boy, to make him as happy as possible, and Mrs Evans, the house-keeper, being enjoined to administer to his temporal wants, by pampering his appetite, and giving him everything he fancied. Poor boy, and then it is wondered that he should grow up selfish and self-willed !

CHAPTER XV.

It was certainly a great relief to the young people in Whitehall Gardens when Victor had departed. He made himself so thoroughly disagreeable, that every pleasure was tainted with some annoyance occasioned by the waywardness of this boy. With his departure came sunshine and happiness in the arrival of Mr and Mrs Vernon.

With what joy was the new mamma received by her little daughter !

Sylvia's affection for Mrs Hope had been one of the strongest feelings she had ever evinced. With her, she was always docile, always gentle ; a word from her lips wrought

wonders. "Mamma, mamma," she murmured, "how glad I am!—how I shall love you, and I will be such a good daughter to you."

"I know you will, my darling Sylvia," said Mrs Vernon; "God grant that we may be mutual blessings to each other."

And thus commenced the relationship of mother and daughter between Mrs Vernon and Sylvia.

Glorious days of happiness now followed. The next day was Saturday, and they were to go early to Burleigh House to bring back Julian, to remain till Sunday evening.

Sylvia scarcely could contain her feelings of impatience during the drive through the bustling streets of the city, and the constant stoppages in the crowded thoroughfares almost made her frantic. But at length they arrived at the gates of the grim old place, and were deposited at the matron's house, and then ushered into her presence.

"Oh! Mrs K.," Sylvia cried, flying up to her, and taking hold of both her hands, "I know you well;—dear old woman! I must give you a kiss." And without further ceremony, she gave a most affectionate *accolade* to the

astonished, but much amused, matron, who exclaimed :

“ Well, you are a funny little lady ! And pray who may you be ? ”

“ Don’t you know ? Why, I am Julian Hope’s sister. ”

“ Oh, that’s it, is it ? ” Mrs K. replied ; then added, “ and I suppose I am now speaking to his father and mother ? ”

The usual greetings having taken place, Sylvia’s impatience could be no longer contained.

“ But where is Julian ? ” she said. “ Why does he not come ? ”

“ Now don’t be so impatient, you little pretty one, ” said Mrs K., laughing. “ Sally, ” she called, “ tell Master Hope to come immediately. He’ll be here in five minutes, don’t fear ; he is dressing himself to be off with you. ”

And in the mean time, while thus waiting, Sylvia, with her usual restlessness, was casting her glances in every direction ; and, *faute de mieux*, took up a worsted stocking Mrs K. had been mending.

“ How badly you darn ! ” she exclaimed,

"Miss Wilkinson would call it regular cobbling. I can do it twice as well : now I will show you."

And she darted her hand into the basket containing sundry heelless and toeless hose, and seeing one with a great hole, on which she thought she could show her ingenuity, she said, "Now a needle and some worsted, and I will give you a lesson."

Mrs K., bursting with laughter, yet rather offended at the aspersions cast upon her powers, which had for so many years been spent upon the mending art, instantly handed over the required implements ; and Sylvia sat down and began gravely to darn a most complicated fracture.

"I think I ought to be able to mend stockings," she said, "if anybody can ; that horrible Miss Wilkinson, my governess, used to cut holes in good stockings, just to plague me, by making me darn them up again, and if I did not go in and out, and all that weary work, oh, what a rage she used to be in !"

But at this moment Julian entered, and the stocking was thrown to the other end of the room, while such greetings went on as may

be imagined from the impulsive Sylvia and his loving mother, and, we may truly add, father ; whilst Mrs K. stood shaking her sides with the laughter in which she had indulged at Sylvia's queer ways.

" Well, he is a good boy, and you may all be proud of him," she said, as soon as she had in a degree recovered her gravity ; " as good a one as ever came here ; but oh ! you curious little body ! " she said again, laughing as she looked at Sylvia performing all sorts of antics round the room, one moment embracing Julian, the next hugging Mrs Vernon, and ending by tossing all the stockings out of the basket, and throwing them up to the ceiling. In vain Mr and Mrs Vernon interfered ; the child was half mad with happiness, and encouraged by Mrs K.'s evident amusement, she gave way to all the fun and joy of her heart.

" Now, Sylvia," at last Mr Vernon said, when he was able to command his countenance, for no one could help laughing heartily at the wild capers of the girl, " I do insist upon your behaving properly ; " and Mrs Vernon also endeavoured to look grave and displeased.

" But, mamma, I will be sensible, if you will just let me go on the terrace for a few moments

with Julian ;—the terrace, you know, we have heard so much of ; we won't be long ; I know we are not to see all the place till next week. Now, dear Mrs K., may I not go ?”

“ To be sure, you funny little thing ; go, as soon as your Julian has picked up all my poor stockings,” said Mrs K., wiping her eyes, which were overflowing with tears of merriment. “ I never saw such a one as you in all my days,” she continued, as Sylvia danced before her a sort of jig ; every moment darting at the old lady and giving her a hug.

Julian, having performed his task, and disposed of all the grey worsted stockings in the basket, led the way, and the pair departed ; Mr Vernon having desired that they should return in ten minutes ; and Mrs Vernon imploring Sylvia to behave herself properly.

“ Oh ! yes, mamma, ‘ *soyez sage, soyez sage,*’ that’s what you would say,” she repeated, as she flew out into the quadrangle.

Julian began really bitterly to repent having allowed her to leave the matron’s house ; he was quite at his wits’ end when he saw what was the state of excitement of his companion. She was a tall girl of her age, looking older than she really was. Like a young antelope

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said, going up to a handsome boy, who was smiling pleasantly at the fair intruder.

“ Oh ! yes,” he replied.

“ Then come along with us ; I want to see everything ; the school-room, and the place where you buy all those good things—come, we have not any time to lose.”

And then turning quickly round, thinking, perhaps, she had been too exclusive in her courtesy, she added, putting on quite a queen-like air of condescension, “ But I shall be glad if you will *all* come with us.”

The boys laughed, much amused ; but it was wonderful how many followed in the steps of the little enchantress, every one seeming to be anxious to show her what might most interest her. Nothing produced this effect more completely than the spot designated as the one where the floggings took place. Her indignation rose very high when she contemplated the possibility of Julian ever being in that dreadful situation, and she abused the headmaster, inwardly, for his wickedness in ever resorting to such cruelties.

“ Sylvia, we must make haste,” Julian said, as he vainly endeavoured to get her out of the school-room, so fascinated was she by the odd

look of the "dirty old place," as she called it. She insisted upon a tall youth lifting her into the Doctor's seat, and certainly that awful tribunal had never been so filled before; Sylvia's pretty little face looking so smilingly over the desk at her admiring spectators. "Now then, Sylvia, we must not keep them waiting any longer," said Julian, impatiently; "you will not have time to see our tuck room to-day."

"But I *will* see it," she said imperiously. "Show the way, young man," she added, to the tall youth, whom she now felt inclined to patronize; and soon she was in T——'s domain, surrounded by boys, talking and laughing at the very top of her pretty voice, and eating tart after tart that was offered to her.

Julian was in agonies, but what could he do? He did not like to leave her, and yet he knew Mr Vernon had an engagement and was anxious to depart.

And here at length Sylvia was discovered by her father and Mrs Vernon, who, becoming impatient, had set out to discover the fugitives.

They were soon brought to the spot by some boys who had not followed in the train

of Sylvia, and there the young lady was caught, just in the act of finishing a delicious tartlet, which had left its red marks in rather an unladylike manner about her mouth.

“ Oh! good gracious, I shall get into a scrape ! ” she exclaimed, as her father’s head appeared over the others at the entrance ; and forthwith she elbowed her way through the crowd, saying :

“ Good-bye, boys, good-bye ; I must go now ; but I will come back to you next Saturday.”

With some little trepidation she looked from one to the other of her parents. Her father’s countenance expressed extreme annoyance ; and Mrs Vernon was grave.

“ You are not fit to be trusted, Sylvia ; and I am very angry,” Mr Vernon said, when they were seated in the carriage, after Sylvia had made her adieux in a far more subdued manner to Mrs K.

Poor Sylvia !—tears now followed ; all the excitement of the day withered away ; and throwing herself into her mamma’s arms she wept bitterly.

When Mr and Mrs Vernon went again to Burleigh House to see Julian, before they left London, Sylvia did not accompany them. It

was real pain to the mother to deprive her of such exquisite delight, but she felt that it was right; and that her first beginning of reformation must be founded on firmness; and though to the poor little girl it was a terrible blow, still, already had her gentle mother acquired such an influence over her mind and heart that it was with wonder Mr Vernon marked the submission with which his usually unmanageable little daughter received this severe sentence; and he thanked God more than ever for a fate which had brought so inestimable a blessing into his house, as such a mother to his child.

Sylvia's non-appearance on the following Saturday was no small disappointment to many at Burleigh House. Julian could scarcely enjoy even the presence of his mother and father-in-law, so distressed was he not to see Sylvia, of whom he was so fond, and now not a little proud, for she had made such a wonderful impression on "the fellows."

We believe there was a great deal of brushing of hair and washing of hands that morning, in the expectation of the coming of the little lady, and the tall youth, to whom the juvenile *coquette* had shown such special favour,

was observed to be in rather low spirits for several days after.

Mrs K. also was very sorry.

"I should like to have seen that curious little creature once more," she said; "you must take care of your young step-daughter, madam," she added, to Mrs Vernon; "I think she will give you more trouble than Julian."

Mrs Vernon answered, "No, I feel sure she will steady down into a most delightful character, Mrs K. The poor child has laboured under disadvantages ever since she was born; has never had any one to direct her in whom she had any confidence—a man cannot manage a very peculiar child like Sylvia. I hope you will find her very much improved the next time we bring her here."

"Well, perhaps so," said the old lady, "but I fear I shall never have such a good laugh again. I shall never forget that merry little fairy as long as I live. I am sure you will be, my dear lady, a good and kind step-mother to the pretty creature, and not curb her spirits too tightly; if I did not think so, I should be quite miserable about the frisky lambkin."

Mr and Mrs Vernon, with Sylvia, left London the following week; *en route* to their

home, they were to pay some visits to relations of Mr Vernon and his daughter. After five weeks' absence the trio arrived at the rectory, where little Mary was ready to meet them ; and they were in a few days joined by a most excellent foreign governess.

CHAPTER XVI.

LORD VICTOR was enjoying himself to the utmost pitch of selfish gratification at the Court. No little bull in a china-shop had it more his own way—everybody and everything seemed to succumb to the will of the over-indulged boy.

If it were with the view of any moral advantage that he had been sent to the Court, his friends were mistaken as to the efficacy of the plan; for there, was to be found every kind of accessory to foster in the young breast the seeds of pride and self-indulgence which had been sown in it—adulation amounting to servility following his every step. As for Mrs

Miller, she worshipped the young lordling as a species of demi-god, told him how beautiful he was grown—how clever and witty. Her whole atmosphere was one of praise, and Victor began to feel that he could exist in no other.

His governess was a Frenchwoman, of anything but sound views of right and wrong, caring little but for her own amusement, and, in her present quarters, very well satisfied for the time being. Mrs Miller made up to her considerably, and much elated by Mademoiselle's enthusiastic admiration of Violet, left no means untried to please her; and this was not very difficult, for her tastes were not the most refined. As for her charge, she gave him over without any reluctance to the tender mercies of Tom Jones, considering that she had discharged every duty when she had said to him:

"Now you, Tom Jones, you tak care of milor, that he no hurt himself, or get mischief."

"Oh yes, Mamselle, I'll *tak* care," was the pert answer, and away they went for hours.

Victor spent most of his time in the stables, that was not devoted to riding and Violet.

Frank Miller had bought his little daughter a diminutive pony, and had delighted in

teaching her to ride. And this she did most fearlessly, with a seat wonderfully graceful and good. With her long dark blue petticoat and most picturesque hat, her magnificent fair hair floating over her shoulders, she was certainly a lovely thing to look upon—a study which Landseer might have coveted—the pony being in its way as perfect as its mistress.

Victor was enchanted to have her as his companion, and never was devotion so entire as that lavished on his baby idol.

“Oh! Violet,” Mrs Miller one day overheard him say to her, as they were amusing themselves in the garden, “how beautiful you are!”

“Am I, Lord Victor?” said the child, artlessly.

“Yes, indeed you are, you pretty little wife of mine,” he added, hugging her most tenderly. “You must give me one of these beautiful curls to take away with me.”

“Your wife, am I to be?” and the little girl looked thoughtful.

“Why, Violet,” answered the boy, “I do intend to marry you some of these days, whatever they may say.”

“My father said, when I told him that you

said you would marry me," replied Violet, "that it was all nonsense, and that I was not a young lady, and could never be your wife."

"But I will make you a young lady!" exclaimed the boy, impatiently. "What business have they all to talk in that way? Even Tom Jones was so impertinent as to laugh when I was talking of what we should do when we were married, and said something vulgar about counting chickens before they were hatched; but they will see," said the boy, and an expression of such precocious determination and unnatural fierceness settled on his countenance that the pretty Violet looked quite alarmed.

"You will marry me, Violet, won't you?" he said, grasping her arm tightly.

The little girl hesitated.

"Why don't you answer?" Victor continued, trembling with impatience, and quite hurting the small arm by his nervous pressure. Violet began to cry.

"Let me go, Lord Victor," she whimpered; "I don't think I should like to marry you; I once told Julian I should like to be *his* wife."

The storm now broke forth. The rage of the boy was uncontrollable, and frightful to behold. In his wild anger he would have

struck Violet, had not Mrs Miller, who had been seated working at the window of her parlour, rushed out to mediate between the contending parties.

“ Violet, you naughty, silly child, what nonsense are you talking ? How dare you tell such stories ? You never said such a thing to Master Julian ; now hold your tongue this moment,” seeing that the child was about to persist in her assertion—“ I have a great mind to whip you, Miss. My darling, my beautiful boy ! ” she added, turning to Lord Victor, who, with tears of anger, was stamping and tearing about, “ it is all an invention of Violet’s ; she never said such a thing—she is not at all fond of Julian, I can assure you ; she only said it to tease you, my own dear one. Julian indeed ! who is not worthy to wipe the dust off your shoes.”

And all the time she was speaking and fondling the spoilt boy, Mrs Miller’s eyes were opened wide, in a way well understood by poor Violet, and a menacing expression was on her countenance.

“ Come here immediately, and tell my Lord you are very sorry for having vexed him, and that what you said was only in joke,” she

added; and the child, perfectly aware that there was no alternative, approached the angry boy and was forced, we may say, thus regularly to perjure herself.

Various were the childish imprecations showered upon Julian by the jealous and vindictive boy; much to the sorrow of Violet, who, having received unceasing kindness from her absent friend ever since she was born, really loved him with all her childish heart. Lord Victor's attentions and presents were of course duly appreciated by her, but the violent temper that he often displayed, his jealous fits, and *exigeantes* demands upon her attention and love, sometimes wearied the poor child, and young as she was, she could plainly discern the great superiority of Julian over the little Lord. He was always the same, always so good, so thoughtful. Her father loved Master Julian so well, and her father always loved what was good.

At this moment the poor child felt in her heart that she could hate the disagreeable boy who was behaving in such a foolish manner towards her; she longed to tell him so, to give him back all his presents. Didn't she love that little work-box—Julian's parting gift—more

than all Lord Victor's fine things put together ? But she dared not show her feelings. Ever since she could distinguish right from wrong, she might have been taught by her mother a system of dissimulation—perhaps as much by example as precept—to call everything by its wrong name, and to place no value upon what was truthful ; but her father's straight-forward honesty, which she had inherited in the strongest degree, counteracted that total want of it in the mother's character, and showed the child, by the contrast, its beauty, worth, and intrinsic value.

Violet trusted in her father—she knew she might rely on what he said ; a kind look from him, she felt, was love, real love, and his affection for her was ever the same, not dependent upon circumstances, as was her mother's. She had already learnt to discover that her mother's favour rose and fell according to the degree of admiration her beauty commanded. She would willingly have relinquished the beauty which drew upon her so much annoyance, and all that weary dressing and trouble. Poor Violet ! if that wish had been granted, had the small-pox seamed your face and disfigured those beautiful features, does it not seem to the eye

which cannot look into the things hidden to mortal gaze that it would have saved you many a pang?

* * * *

Victor was at length appeased. Mrs Miller applied the most emollient of salves to a wounded self-esteem,—flattery of the most exaggerated description, interspersed with comparisons as to the inferior merits and attractions of his rival, which fell like oil on his troubled heart. On going to bed that night, Mrs Miller said to Violet :

“ You behaved pretty well altogether in that quarrel you had with darling Victor, though it was very silly of you to talk in that way about Master Julian. You must never do it again. I like the boy very much, but it is as good as your life is worth to offend our little Lord. You don’t know what you are doing ; Julian and he will not be much here together, I dare say, and you ought to know better than to worry him by speaking kindly of a boy he cannot endure.”

“ And why does he not like him, Mimmie ? ” asked Violet ; “ Julian, who is so good and kind, much better, I am sure, than he is.”

“ I desire you will never say that again, and

whilst Lord Victor is here, if you don't behave properly to him, you shall be well punished, that I can tell you. Now go to sleep, and I desire you will not tell your father anything about this nonsensical quarrel when he returns to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVII.

JERROLD HOPE never relaxed in his efforts to soften his father's heart towards the son of his brother. That pictured face had stirred up memories and feelings in his soul that he did not wish to subdue. He had caused the two portraits of his uncle to be hung up in his own private sitting-room, placing before each a green curtain, in case the sight of these memorials of poor Julian Hope might offend his father's eye.

This unfortunate crippled young man seemed to bear in that distorted form all that there was of gentleness and amiability in that branch of the family. His brother Alexander was

an irredeemable *roué*, wasting his substance in riotous living, amongst associates most repugnant to the pride and refined ideas of his father. As years passed on, and he looked upon the position of his sons, Mr Hope began to feel convictions stealing into his mind, and there at length fixing themselves, which made him by degrees incline more to Jerrold's entreaties that he would seek to discover some further particulars of Julian Hope's children. Jerrold also gained many particulars from Nurse Martha, which strengthened the enthusiastic feeling of admiration and compassion which he felt towards the memory of his ill-used uncle. She told him of the fair young Mary, who had been the petted favourite of her mistress. "As sweet a flower she was," the old woman continued, "as ever blossomed, and as good as she was fair. It was wrong of her to consent to that stolen marriage; but young people will be foolish sometimes; and the temptation was great. She was thrown so much in his way, poor thing! I saw it all coming, and longed to speak, but what good would it have done? And oh, the dreadful day when it was known that they had eloped! Certainly, that was my mistress's

death-blow ; she had long suffered from ill-health, and her heart was the affected part."

"Did she die immediately after the marriage?" asked Jerrold.

"No, Mrs Hope lingered for several months; perhaps had she been longer spared, a change might have come over her heart, in which, I grieve to say, anger and mortified pride were the chief emotions. There was some degree of softening in her mind a few days before her death; but it pleased God to let it not avail—may be to punish the poor young man for his disobedience; and punished, indeed, he was."

There was a pause. Martha's tears flowed fast, and she could not speak; Jerrold seemed deeply meditating.

"Martha," he said, at length, "will you do an errand for me?"

"What is it, Mr Jerrold?" she answered.

"I want you to go to Brooklands, and see my uncle's widow, and inquire about the children."

"Oh! dear sir, how can I do such a thing?" the old woman replied, alarmed at a proposal which, at the first hearing, sounded awful. "How could you do without me, Mr Jerrold? And Miss Mary that was is no longer a widow,

poor and friendless, but married to another, with every worldly comfort; if I did not go to her when she was friendless, and still mourning for the loss of that dear one, whom I wonder she could ever forget—what business have I with her now?”

“But, Martha, listen to me;—it is for the sake of the children I wish you to go; you see what I am, dear nurse, a poor, miserable cripple, whose days are numbered; and you also know what my brother Alex. is; what two wretched representatives of all this wealth are we! I believe almost the whole of this rich property is entailed on the male heirs; therefore, in default of us, my uncle Julian’s boy comes next. As sure as you are sitting there, Martha, neither myself nor my brother will ever live to inherit this wealth. Look at poor Alex.!—has not a life of dissipation and vice, even from boyhood, planted in his constitution the seeds of disease, which foretell a very short career?—and as for me, every one knows what my fate must be.”

The attached nurse only shook her head sadly; she could not deny the truth of these words; and Jerrold proceeded:

“I want to see these cousins, to have them here ; but, first of all, I should like to know something about them. Now my father is absent, I want you to go to Brooklands—it is not more than fifty miles from hence ; and the rail-road will take you as far as the town of A——, from whence you can proceed in a fly. When there, I want you to go to the rectory and see Mrs Vernon. You may tell her you come from me, and make her understand how earnestly I long to make acquaintance with my cousins, and that I shall have no peace or rest till I accomplish that end.”

“ But, Mr Jerrold, my master, will he ever consent, think you ? ”

“ Leave all that to me, nurse. I am sure he will ; you cannot imagine how different he has been for a long time, when I have ventured to speak upon the subject ; so much less stern and implacable. It seems that by some means he has heard of the boy, for he said one day that he believed he had been brought up well. So you will go, Martha—the sooner the better.”

The poor old nurse, sadly perplexed how to make up her mind to such a formidable undertaking, yet, not having the heart to refuse

any request of her poor young master, at length consented ; and it was with much nervous trepidation that she set off to Brooklands, the day but one after this conversation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was a beautiful day towards the end of May when Nurse Martha alighted at a small inn or public-house which attracted her notice as she arrived within the precincts of Brooklands. She saw the spire of the church at no great distance, and judged correctly that the rectory could not be far off.

She thought it would be better to walk to it, a less nervous proceeding, she deemed it, than that of the commotion she fancied to create in that quiet spot by a carriage stopping at the gate, and the unusual appearance of a strange old woman issuing from it.

The village of Brooklands was most pictur-

esque in its aspect, the cottages all so strikingly neat, with their gable ends painted black and white, the little gardens before most of the dwellings filled with bright spring flowers.

As Nurse Martha turned down a lane, indicated to her as leading to the rectory, she heard a sound of gay young voices, and soon a party, consisting of two girls and a youth, approached her, accompanied by an enormous dog, who, seeing a stranger advancing, immediately sprang, but with perfectly harmless intent, toward her.

Old Martha was not fond of dogs at any time, and when she saw this formidable-looking animal, her nervous terror was great, and she called out in great dismay for help. In a moment the boy was by her side.

"Down, Lion!" he said, and his words were echoed by the girls, who peremptorily called the dog to their side, and the fierce-looking animal in a moment obeyed their youthful voices. The youth then said:

"I am sorry our dog has frightened you, madam; he is really very good-natured, and never intends to do mischief; but he is certainly rough in his appearance and manner." Whilst he thus kindly and smilingly spoke, the

old woman's eyes were fixed upon him in a manner quite calculated to surprise him, and presently, with a nervous grasp, she clutched hold of his arm.

"Master Julian!" she faltered.

"Yes, that is my name; have you ever seen me before?" he asked quietly.

"I have seen a face like yours," she said; and then she paused, her frame shaking with agitation. "Oh my boy, my boy!" she continued, tears falling fast from her eyes, "I never thought to look upon the like of you again, never till I met you in heaven; but here is your living image in your son. Yes, dear young gentleman," she added, addressing the astonished Julian, "I did not require you to tell me who you were; I should have known you amongst ten thousand." The two girls had by this time joined the group, and stood close to Julian, their eyes wide open with astonishment, staring at the old woman.

"Yes," continued Martha, having steadily surveyed them, "yes, I see who you are also," and she gently drew Mary towards her, and looked searchingly in her face; "you are like the gentle Mary, but not quite so bonny as she was when I last saw her."

"My name is Mary," the girl said in a silvery voice, smiling so sweetly as she spoke, that the stranger's heart again melted, and she faltered forth :

"Miss Mary, sweet Miss Mary! you are like her, my dear, dear child."

And then, after a short pause, she looked inquisitively at Sylvia, and said :

"You don't belong to them ; no Hope ever had such dazzling dark eyes, and that carnation on their cheeks ; they are all blue-eyed and fair-haired ; for the most part pale, unless some emotion brings the colour for a brief space to their face ; and Miss Mary was very fair also. Ah," she added, shaking her head mournfully, and in an under-tone, "too fair, too fair, poor young creature!"

"But, ma'am," said Sylvia, looking rather affronted, "I do belong to them, I can tell you ; I am their sister."

"Oh, Miss Vernon, I presume," the old woman said, very stiffly.

"Yes, my name is Vernon, but I am still their sister ; their mamma is mine too, and my papa is theirs also," persisted Sylvia, waxing very impatient, and immediately conceiving a dislike to the stranger. "Come along, Mary,

and Julian, we have no time to lose ; you know Mademoiselle said we were not to be late ; so make haste. Lion, Lion, where are you ?—we must be off.”

But Nurse Martha laid a hand upon Julian and Mary, and said :

“ My dear children, you must excuse my freedom ; indeed I know by your faces you will, when I tell you that I want you to take me to your mother ; I think she will receive me kindly ; me whom she once loved—I knew her when she was a very little girl ; and I was your dear father’s nurse.”

“ What, Nurse Martha ? ” was the exclamation from both Julian and Mary, the latter throwing her arms round the neck of the delighted old woman. “ We have heard mamma talk so very often of you.”

“ Yes,” said Julian, and his lips quivered with emotion, “ and my dear father used often to mention your name ; I even can remember well his saying, when he was very ill and suffering, “ Mary, how sorry Nurse Martha would be for me ! ”

“ And Nurse Martha was indeed sorry for him, poor darling ! she has never had a day of happiness since he left his home. Oh, Master

Julian," she said, as, leaning on his arm, and Mary holding tenderly her other hand, she walked towards the rectory, "if bitter tears could have helped him, and never-ceasing prayers, he had them from me. And your mamma, how is she, and are you all happy?"

"We are very happy now," said Julian, "for Mr Vernon is so kind and good to us all; but mamma had many years of such great sorrow, dear Nurse Martha. But where is Sylvia? he said, turning suddenly round to look for her; but no Sylvia was to be seen; she had started off alone with Lion.

Julian coloured with one of those emotions which Nurse Martha had designated as having the power of bringing the colour into the cheek of a Hope, but he took no further notice, and they soon reached the rectory. The meeting between Mrs Vernon and her old friend may well be imagined; such a tide of painful recollections pressing upon both, on thus, after so many years, being re-united, and both had so much to say.

How wonderful is the renewal of intercourse between those who have been early united by bonds of real affection and confidence! Far different is it from the friendships we contract

in after life, valuable and delightful as they may be, but lacking the *old* associations which cling to the heart, making one live again in memory and in feeling on the past, and annihilating the intervening space, with its years of sorrow or of joy, which have passed since last we met.

Julian and Mary soon felt their presence could be dispensed with, so left the reunited friends together, whilst they went in search of Sylvia, whom they knew they should find somewhere in the grounds of Lyle Court.

* * * *

The conversation which ensued between Mrs Vernon and Nurse Martha was indeed intensely interesting to both. The history of many years of sorrow was to be recorded on both sides, and many bitter tears were to be shed whilst the sad story was being told. Mr Vernon was away from home for a few days, therefore there was nothing to interrupt the discourse. A feeling almost of shame seemed to fill Mrs Vernon's heart when she had to allude to her second marriage.

"But, dear nurse," she said, as she unlocked a cabinet, from whence she took out a letter, "this is what decided me to take a

step, the idea of which filled me with dismay, but of which I have never since repented. Indeed, I should be worse than ungrateful if I did not love and respect that excellent man, who has indeed been a father to my ever-beloved Julian's children."

Mrs Vernon placed young Julian's letter in Mrs Martha's hands, that letter she had received after telling him of Mr Vernon's proposal to her. The old woman adjusted her spectacles, and read the epistle with much attention, and when it was finished, she laid her hand upon that of Mrs Vernon, who sat nervously watching her, and said :

"My dear, I rejoice indeed that you did marry 'the good man,' as the dear boy called him. It must have been a whisper from Heaven which inspired him to write that letter. Dear, dear lad, I see at once, by every line in his sweet face, that he is his father all over ; only he has had advantages our dear Julian never possessed. Your son was not trained, like his father, in indulgence unbounded ; he has been brought up to look the world with all its trials and difficulties steadily in the face. My dear boy was never taught to view it but as a scene of enjoyment and unlimited freedom."

"But, nurse," rejoined Mrs Vernon, clasping her hands, whilst tears fell fast down her cheeks, "*he* was tried in the furnace of affliction, and came out of it refined—as pure and unspotted as mortal man can be; you can little imagine his goodness, his patience, and perfect faith. If there was ever a saint on earth, it was my beloved husband; and oh, few know what were his sufferings of mind,—his remorse."

"And he is happy now, dear lady," interrupted Mrs Martha, seeing how deeply agitating were these remembrances to Mrs Vernon; "let us talk about that dear son of yours—oh, what a sunbeam was his smile to my old heart!—and the sweet young lady."

"Yes, indeed, they are dear good children," the mother replied; and then she proceeded to tell all that Julian had been to her; dilating on the delightful theme, till smiles of gratitude and maternal pride succeeded the tears which the painful memory of his suffering father had caused to flow.

"Julian Hope's son shall be no longer indebted to the generosity of a stranger, although that stranger is as good a man as Mr Vernon," said the old woman, kindling

up, and looking indignant at the idea. "To think," she continued, in agitated accents, "that a child of our house should have ever been behoven for education to any one but the family! But times are changing, thank God, and all will be right at last; yes, at last, though it comes too late for some things, for my poor dear boy that's gone."

After a pause, for both had to calm their agitation, Mrs Martha told Mrs Vernon her errand—why she saw her there—how determined the poor cripple, Jerrold, was to place his cousins in their places, as children belonging to the family; and how for many years he had been endeavouring to bring about the accomplishment of this purpose with his austere father.

Mrs Vernon was, of course, much excited by this communication; but perhaps she scarcely knew whether to feel pleasure or pain at the idea of the change.

A sort of repugnance, a kind of jealous pang, assailed the mother's heart when she thought of others but herself and her kind husband usurping any claim over her children—children who had been so long disowned and wronged by their rich relations; who

had been so wholly her own for so many years.

But now her dear old friend must be cared for. A servant was despatched to dismiss the fly, and order it not to return till the day after the following. Mrs Martha's carpet-bag was brought up to the rectory, and she was installed in a most comfortable room,—Mrs Vernon presiding over every arrangement with pleased assiduity.

Whilst conducting her visitor to her apartment, their progress was impeded by the sound of a small voice, and a little figure who ran towards Mrs Vernon calling her “Mamma!”

It was her little son; the only child she ever had who bore the name of Vernon. As she stooped to caress the pretty boy, it was with almost a shamefaced look that she glanced at the old nurse.

How would she welcome a child of hers who was not a Hope?

But Martha had no frown upon her brow as she laid her hand upon the fair head, and murmured:

“God bless you—you child of a good man!”

CHAPTER XIX.

WE must remind our readers that years have rolled on, and our boys and girls are now in a transition state, a state not, in general, either becoming or agreeable, but usually an awkward, ungainly period—a crisis when the growth seems too great for the strength, the dress even seeming to be at a loss how to set off to advantage the unformed figure. And the mind, too, is in an unsettled state ; childish associations still clinging to it, whilst older thoughts, feelings, and associations mingle with the pleasures and occupations of earlier days. But on our young people the change has fallen most kindly and gently ; we see

nothing unpleasing in their present aspect, although they are all greatly altered. Perhaps their happy, healthy country life, and living so completely in the atmosphere of refinement, with those only calculated to improve their minds and manners, may have had due effect in preserving the freedom and grace of their outward bearing; and Dame Nature might also claim her share of merit in the personal keeping and appearance of the group.

Julian is a tall youth, promising much as to the manliness and symmetry of his figure. His face we never described as strictly handsome.

The Hopes were not what is called a handsome race, but we would not change his countenance for the most regular style of classic perfection. An observer might gaze upon his face with feelings of equal pleasure and interest. It was very easy to discern that the beauty of the expression shining from his every look was the emanation of a spirit which might more justly be appreciated the more intimately it was known.

Sylvia Vernon is less changed than the brother and sister, since we followed her through those madcap *escapades* at Burleigh House. She is very tall and slender, with a

small head; and a very youthful little face, lighted up by brilliant eyes, the carnation colour of her cheeks blending softly with the pure whiteness of her skin. Her dark hair is still permitted to hang in rich curls about her shoulders, although there is much talk at the rectory of a change of *coiffure* for Miss Vernon.

Mrs Vernon rather dreaded taking any steps towards transforming Sylvia from a child to a woman. She was anxious to prolong as much as possible those happy careless days, that period which was so rapidly drawing to a close—a blissful childhood!

Sylvia was dear to Mrs Vernon as her own child. She felt surprised at her strong love for her husband's daughter, sometimes almost reproaching herself for the feeling, insomuch that a conviction would strike her that she ought not to love her quite as well as her little Mary, yet so it was. And perhaps this intensity of affection arose from the extreme anxiety which was mingled with Mrs Vernon's affection for her young daughter-in-law.

Her own gentle child was always docile, always good—how different from Sylvia!

There was so much to be done for her; the

mother's eye must ever be upon her ; so much to improve, and even to correct ; but still, troublesome as was the girl, often wearying and discomforting Mrs Vernon, there was a fascination even in her faults, and, what covered a multitude of sins, a heart so warm and really kind, and a love so wonderful for her mother-in-law, that Sylvia became dearer and dearer to her as time sped on, and the girl was on the very verge of womanhood.

She became peculiarly tenacious with regard to her step-mother. She watched every look and word which fell from Mrs Vernon's lips ; could scarcely brook that her love should even be divided with any of the other members of the family ; was amusingly jealous of her father, of her little brother, even of Mary, indeed of all save *one*, and to him she would have relinquished everything, even this precious share of the mother's love.

Yes, Sylvia's heart was given early to Julian, and Mrs Vernon saw it clearly. With the quick perception of a woman she soon discovered how it was, and a sensation of dread filled her heart when she thought upon it.

What if, when time rolled on, bringing about the anxious period when Sylvia's feel-

ings would be developed and disclosed, they should not be returned? As for Julian, his mother felt sure that it had never entered into his imagination to think of her but as a dear sister whom he loved most fondly, and who he was quite aware loved him with no common affection—an affection, indeed, which sometimes might have almost wearied any one but himself. For most *exigeante* was the young lady, and tenacious of the slightest trifle which she thought implied anything like coldness or indifference on his part. Yet so affectionate and devoted did Julian know her to be to those she loved, particularly to his dearly loved mother, that he bore with patience all her little ebullitions of temper, even the pretty childish tyranny she would fain have exercised over him, had not a something indescribable in his demeanour towards the softer sex exercised a degree of restraint over her, even in her most wayward moods, and caused her to respect as well as love him.

Mrs Vernon's heart felt anxious when her eyes rested upon the girl she really doted upon, and saw her eager, animated countenance; her eyes fixed upon Julian, drinking in every word that fell from his lips; watching

his every movement, her cheek varying to every tint of the rose, as the feelings of her heart influenced her either to pleasure or pain, —a random word often causing the latter sensation, which Julian, in his ignorance, had not the remotest idea could possibly touch any chord of her susceptible heart.

Mrs Vernon could only pray, and that she did with all the fervour of her trusting nature, that all would end well for the happiness of her two beloved children.

One source of great irritation to Sylvia was the line of demarcation which denoted the difference between the two families. She chafed at the idea of their names not being the same, that Mrs Vernon was not her own real mother, and grieved over the striking un-resemblance which, as Mrs Martha said, so clearly revealed that she did not belong to them; her dark eyes and hair, and brilliant complexion, showing so plainly that she was not indeed a "Hope." Her new little brother—even he was fair-haired and blue-eyed—and the girl would look fixedly at her face in the glass till she could have wept with spite to think how unlike she was to the rest of the family; little heeding or appreciating the

fact, that she far excelled them all in real beauty.

When Julian and Mary conducted Nurse Martha to their mother's presence, Sylvia, her tenacious feelings all alive, and irritated against the old woman who looked upon her coldly, and the words, "She does not belong to you!" ringing harshly in her ears, flew down the hill which led from the vicarage, followed by Lion. She would have made no unfit representation of a youthful Atalanta—that young girl, as she sped along with her graceful figure and finely moulded limbs, her small and beautifully formed nostrils dilated, her sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, her hair floating down her neck and shoulders; all bespeaking the impatience of her feelings. Sylvia never paused until she reached the gate of Mrs Miller's cottage. She was then attracted probably by the notes of a guitar, and a sweet childish voice accompanying it; so leaning on the little wicket, panting and breathless, she stood for a moment or two contemplating the songstress, and then exclaimed :

"Come, Violet, with me; I am going to our drawing-room in the wood; bring your guitar,

and charm away my evil mood, little one ; you shall be to me what David was to Saul."

And she opened the gate, and walked towards Violet, who stared at her with her large eyes of celestial blue.

" Mrs Miller, may not Violet come with me?" she said, addressing this good lady, who was, as usual, sitting working at some fanciful dress for her daughter, at her parlour window.

" Oh! of course, Miss Vernon," she replied; " but how is it you are alone this afternoon?"

Sylvia tossed her head with a scornful gesture, and said, " Oh, they have found a friend, and did not want my company."

" And who may that be, Miss Vernon?"

" Some old nurse of Julian's father, who has cast up," replied the girl.

" Then it is quite proper, if it was their father's nurse, that she should be attended to with respect, Miss Vernon," said Mrs Miller, in the very sententious tone, which she always adopted when going back in imagination to her capacity of head nurse at Lyle Court. " I am sure I know what it is to be the respected nurse of a family to whose service I have de-

voted my best days. Yes, to think of all that I have done for those children; the nights' rest I have lost, the weary—"

But Sylvia, who had heard all this many and many a time repeated, cut the speech, which was, as usual, beginning to be pathetic, very short, by saying :

"Oh, yes, Mrs Miller, I dare say she may be a very good old woman, but I think her a great bore; so just let Violet come with me. I will carry the guitar."

And she seized the guitar with one hand, Violet's with the other, and rapidly drew her away, in spite of Mrs Miller's entreaties that she would wait a moment, that she might make a few arrangements in her daughter's dress before she departed.

They passed through a small side gate which led at once into the park, and then made their way to a thick wood at no great distance. This was a favourite resort of all the young people, and at this lovely season of the year the whole wood was enamelled with the flowers of spring; those welcome blossoms telling of the departure of gloomy winter, harbingers of the approach of smiling verdant summer.

"Miss Vernon, do not walk quite so fast,

please," said Violet, as they ascended with no slow pace the steep winding walks which led to the summit of the wood. "I should so like to pick some of those primroses and blue-bells to make a wreath for my hat."

"You vain little creature!" was the answer; "well, pick away, I'll help you, if you will only promise to sing to me afterwards as long as I please."

And with her characteristic energy, Sylvia began plucking handfuls of flowers, which she flung into the straw hat Violet held out for that purpose. Whilst thus employed, the girl, who was always singing—to whom everything suggested a song—began at once to warble in her sweet, bird-like voice :

"Gathering flowers from the break of morn,
Ours is no life for the world to scorn ;
Roving the woods and the meadows green,
Seeking the nooks where the elves have been,
Culling the ferns from each mossy bed,
Where the modest violet hides her head ;
Or plucking the bloom of the sweet hare-bell,
Down in the dells where the fairies dwell.

"Ho ! for the woods at the dawn of day,
Up with the sun and away, away !
Oh ! what a joyous life is ours,
Shaking the dew from the woodland flowers,
Seeking the spots where the cowslips lie
Hidden afar from the world's dull eye,

Scenting the air with their rich perfume ;
Laden we come with their golden bloom,
Gathering flowers from the break of morn."

And soon another voice joined in the duet, a rich contralto blending most harmoniously with Violet's high soprano notes, the woods re-echoing with the clear, beautiful strain. They had no audience save Lion, who, resting himself in luxurious ease on the mossy turf, seemed to watch their every movement, and with his eyes fixed complacently upon the fair songstresses, appeared thoroughly to enjoy the sight and sounds. When sufficient flowers had been gathered, they proceeded to the spot which they styled the rustic drawing-room. It was a smooth piece of lawn, which had been opened out in front, nearly at the edge of a precipitous hill, and commanded a splendid and extensive view of the surrounding country.

At this moment it was truly a most delicious spot, fragrant and bright with the odour of spring shrubs in full blossom. Lilacs of every hue—the golden branches of the graceful Laburnum, and the delicious scent of the May, rendering the air "perfumed breath" indeed. Rustic seats and tables were placed under the spreading trees, and the young people of the

Court and rectory spent many a happy day in this their sylvan reception-room. A picturesque little cottage close by contained every appliance for culinary purposes; quite a *bijou* miniature kitchen, in which many a dainty dish was made or spoilt by aristocratic young hands, but which, nevertheless, was more enjoyed than the most *recherché entrées* of Monsieur Froissart, the grand *artiste* of the Glenmore *cuisine*. This paradise attained, Sylvia threw herself at once upon one of the seats, a little exhausted after the breathless excitement of her *trajet*—Violet calmly seating herself on the turf, and beginning with much dexterity to construct her wreath.

The guitar was still in Sylvia's hand, and she swept a few chords upon it occasionally, as she talked to Violet.

“Oh vanity, vanity!” she exclaimed, as she looked contemptuously at her companion, “I wonder what would tempt me to waste time in trying to smarten up thus my old straw hat.” And as she spoke she took it off and threw it on the ground.

“My mother says it is never wasting time, trying to make oneself look pretty,” Violet replied. Sylvia laughed heartily.

"I dare say she thinks so," she said, and then looking silently at the young girl for a brief space, she added, "But, Violet, you know that you are already very pretty, do you not?"

Violet answered without hesitation.

"Yes, I do; at least I hear people say so every day, but still I suppose I am not pretty enough, for Mimmie is always trying to make me more so; sometimes, Miss Vernon, do you know?" she added, confidentially, "I almost wish I had been ugly."

"Why?" questioned Sylvia.

"Oh! I am so teased and tormented from morning till night. I must not do this, because it is bad for the complexion, nor something else, because it may spoil my figure. My hair must always be so smooth. I must never play at games that disturb my dress. If I look pale, Mimmie is angry, and if I am flushed, it is still worse. My mother never really loves me but when I am in my best looks, and then I am her *beautiful daughter*. Oh, it is so tiresome to be beautiful!" and Violet sighed wearily.

"Poor Violet!" said Sylvia, much amused, "you certainly seem to pay a heavy penalty

for that pretty face ; still I am sure, after all, you would not change it for an ugly one."

"Why—no!" was the rather hesitating answer ; "sometimes I like very much being admired, by some people, and sometimes I hate it, and I know one whose admiration makes me quite shiver."

"And who may that be, little flower?" asked Sylvia.

"Don't tell, pray, if I say who it is," mysteriously Violet murmured.

"Say on, *ma belle*!" was the answer.

"Lord Victor!—but my mother would kill me if she knew I had told you ; she is so angry if I do not let him do and say just what he pleases, and I so *hate* him."

And the little beauty's eyes filled with indignant tears.

"How different," she continued, "he is to Mr Julian!"

"Yes, I should think so indeed!" Sylvia exclaimed quickly.

"I like Mr Julian to admire me," Violet continued. "A word—a look of kindness from him is so delightful!" she exclaimed, her eyes sparkling and her colour heightening. "And he is always so kind, so good to me."

When I was a baby he used to play with me, and ever since he has always been the same—such a friend!—dear, dear Mr Julian!”

The girl was so absorbed in the interest which the idea excited, that she did not perceive the countenance of her companion until she was attracted to it by the loud twanging sounds which proceeded from the guitar Sylvia still held in her hand. She had struck into a Spanish march, and the manner in which she drummed upon the instrument (a movement in the time which, when executed skilfully, produces a very good effect) made Violet open her eyes with astonishment, and rather terror, for the fate of her poor guitar.

“Miss Vernon, what is the matter?” she said, as she now looked upon the face of Sylvia. It was pale, and there was an expression in it that almost frightened her. “Are you ill?” she added, anxiously.

“No!—you foolish little thing! Now you have finished your stupid wreath, put on that hat with its blue and yellow adornments, and sing to me: did I not tell you that I had an evil spirit in me this afternoon, and that you were to charm it away?”

“What shall I sing, Miss Sylvia?”

“ Anything, only begin at once. Here, take your guitar.”

Violet did sing ; and it was with a voice clear and sweet, as we might imagine that of a seraph, that she warbled forth the following words :

“ For mine is the lay that lightly floats,
And mine are the murmuring dying notes,
That fall as soft as the snow on the sea,
And melt in the heart as instantly !
And the passionate strain that deeply-going
Refines the bosom it trembles through,
As the musk wind over the water flowing,
Ruffles the wave, but sweetens it too.”

CHAPTER XX.

To digress a little.

Violet was fifteen. Our readers may form a very true idea of the manner in which she had been hitherto trained by her mother. Frank Miller earnestly wished better things for this child upon whom he doted. He saw looming in the distance evils which he fain would have averted, in the terrific forms of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." And what was there to ward off these dread enemies?

Certainly not a mother's arm.

He felt all this as he glanced towards the future destiny of his child, but he too became

so dazzled by her wonderful beauty, and so led captive by the extraordinary influence of its fascination, that he began to shut his eyes against the suggestions of his better judgment; and his wife, taking advantage of this softening of his original character, soon gained the day, and exercised a complete influence over the really excellent, honest Frank Miller. And many a wiser man than our worthy Vulcan has succumbed no less weakly to the will of a woman far inferior in every admirable quality to himself. But Frank Miller was most desirous that his daughter should have a good wholesome education—one fitted for her line of life. He did not mind the cost. He was a thriving man, and had all the veterinary business of that country-side. He still kept up the forge, but merely superintending the concern. So he could afford to give Violet advantages, and wished to send her to school, away from home—and lo ! be it spoken—away from her mother's influences. But Mrs Miller would not hear of such a plan : her daughter sent to a vulgar place to associate with farmers' and shopkeepers' daughters, she wondered how they would turn her out indeed ; and as for learning, what did she want of that rubbish,

just to spoil her figure by stooping over books and writing ? ”

“ Now a governess, Frank Miller,” she added, coaxingly ; “ some one whom *I* could superintend—”

But in that instance he was firm.

“ A governess, indeed, for the like of us ! A pretty one it would be who would come to a blacksmith’s daughter, and even if we could find one, a precious plague would she prove ! No, Mrs Miller, you have your own way nine times out of ten, but in this you never will.”

“ Very well, Mr Miller, pray have it *your* own way, then ; I can only tell you that I cannot nor will not teach her. I have tried a hundred times, and a more tiresome, inattentive child I never came across ; my nerves are not strong enough for teaching, but to school she shall *never* go.”

Frank, as usual, put an end to the altercation by leaving the house ; but he formed his own plans, called on the village schoolmaster, and made an arrangement with him that he should come every evening for an hour, and teach Violet to read and write. And this was the only education she received. With

great difficulty she was taught to perform these two acquirements, most indifferently.

One accomplishment, however, Nature had bestowed gratuitously upon her, and that was the power of singing. She possessed a voice quite wonderful in its tone and flexibility. She had sung from her cradle ; and this gift she certainly derived from her mother, who was always famous for her fine voice, and the songs which resounded through the spacious nurseries of Lyle Court, as she rocked the little lords and ladies to rest.

Mrs Vernon had always marked the great talent for music the child possessed, and longed to cultivate it, but had been withheld from giving her regular instruction, fearing that it would only foster more strongly the vanity and love of admiration the foolish mother seemed to strive so industriously to inculcate in the nature of the poor child. But as time went on, Mrs Vernon began to take much interest in the church choir, and Violet's voice was too valuable to be dispensed with ; she was invited to join with her own children in all the practising necessary for the Sunday service ; and Mademoiselle Hoffmann, the German governess, was so enchanted by the

genius, as well as the beautiful voice of Violet, that she implored Mrs Vernon to allow her to give the girl regular instruction in music. It was, however, with the greatest difficulty that the clever governess could contrive to teach her the necessary rudiments of the science ; though, with a kind of intuition, her fingers soon became quite at home on the instrument, and guided by an ear of extraordinary quickness, she soon defied all method and teaching, surprising the German instructress by her extraordinary flights of natural talent, bidding fair, could she be induced to study with any degree of diligence, to render her quite wonderful as a musician. In German and French, Mademoiselle Hoffmann would gladly have instructed Violet. But though her fine ear soon enabled her to converse with tolerable fluency in these languages, she was incorrigibly idle.

Fate seemed propitious to the furtherance of Violet's musical studies.

An itinerant Italian playing on a guitar, who was travelling through the village, met with a dreadful accident which kept him for months laid up in a cottage at Brooklands.

His case excited much sympathy ; and he received much kindness and assistance from every one.

Mr and Mrs Vernon were constant in their care of this unfortunate man, who seemed inoffensive and amiable. Mrs Miller, who, to do her justice, was never behindhand in acts of charity—particularly when they were the fashion—was not at all backward in this case. Mrs Vernon and the young ladies visited poor Leonardo daily, carrying to him with their own hands little dainties ; why might she not do the same ? When he was recovering, the Italian would lie on his bed, propped up with pillows, his beloved guitar his constant companion and solace. And by his side was Violet often to be found ; her great ambition was to learn to play upon that instrument, and too glad was the poor man to gratify her wish.

The genius of the girl fell like light and refreshment on the heart of this native of a music-loving country. He looked upon her as one whom he might have glorified in acknowledging to have belonged to his *bella Italia*, that sweet land of song : and it was to him

happiness indescribable to instruct the gifted child, not only how to play upon the guitar, but to sing the songs he loved so well.

Some difficulty he certainly had in making her English tongue pronounce the liquid accents of his melodious language; but even this he accomplished by dint of perseverance; and soon his pride and exultation in his pupil knew no bounds; and no wonder. It would be difficult to imagine anything more delicious than the tones of that rich voice of Violet's.

We have, perhaps, once or twice in a lifetime been overpowered by the notes of a chorister in some cathedral—a voice which has thrilled upon our senses with an indescribable sensation of delight; a sound partaking of nothing earthly, elevating one's heart beyond the world, causing one to look in imagination to that kingdom where

“Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry.”

And this was the quality of Violet's voice at the age of eleven.

The Italian, though he revelled in its present beauty, used to implore Mrs Miller not to allow *la bella fanciulla* to use it so much at her early age; but how could Violet check her warbling? She was always singing and play-

ing on the guitar which a few hints from Mrs Miller soon extracted from the Glenmore family ; and by the time she had reached her fifteenth year, her proficiency in music, or rather her wonderful taste and genius, standing in the place of theoretical knowledge, were truly surprising.

But whilst she thus progressed in musical attainments, the poor girl was deplorably ignorant in everything else. She could read no better than a child (in these precocious days) of five years old ; her writing would have shamed our kitchen-maids, and as for her spelling !!!

"Rowy," said her father, one Sunday evening when she had been spelling over a chapter of the Bible to him, "I wish you read a little better. I really am quite ashamed when I think how old you are, and how little you can do, save to sing and play upon the guitar ; and what good will all this music be to you, I wonder ? "

Violet turned very red ; she really was a sweet-tempered child, and loved her father most dearly.

"But, father," she said, tears starting to her eyes, "you love to hear me sing."

"Yes, my child, I do—I love it rather too

much; I often think it quite a sin. Rosy, when I am an old man, and cannot see to read my Bible, I should like to think I had a daughter who would do it for me, but I have no pleasure in hearing you read in that manner; and you never seem to try to get on. Mr Jennings complains that you never will attend, and that you contrive to be out of the way most evenings when he comes to teach you; you ought to remember, Violet, you will soon be a woman."

"I will try to do better," Violet said, and looked so sad and penitent, and withal so lovely, as, seated on a foot-stool at his feet, she leant her fairy head upon his knees and gazed up into his face, that he could say nought more in any way savouring of harshness.

"Well, well," he added, almost apologetically, "let me wipe away those two large tears, and say no more about it."

This was the discipline exercised over Violet.

"Naught under heaven so strongly doth allure
The sense of man, and all his minde possesse,
As beauty's lovely bait that doth procure
Great warriors oft their rigor to repressse,
And mighty hands forget their manlinesse.
Drawne with the power of an heart-robbing eye,
And wrapt in fetters of a golden tresse,

That can with melting pleasure nullifye
Their hardened hearts enured to blood and cruelty."

"Father," said Violet, still in a subdued tone of voice, "I know I read very badly, but I can sing you a beautiful new hymn this Sunday evening, now we are all alone and no one to interrupt us. Mimmie does not care for hymns much, I think, but I love them; Mrs Vernon taught it to me this week."

"And so do I love them, my child!" Frank Miller tenderly replied, "and that good, kind lady, you love her very much, Rosy, do you not?"

"Love her!" exclaimed the girl, "I think I do, indeed!" and then turning her face towards her father, her eyes glancing upwards, she sang the hymn:

"Pass away, earthly joys,
Jesus is mine."

Poor girl! as she carolled the holy words with an expression and pathos which almost brought the moisture to Frank's eyes—unaccustomed as they were to such unmanly weakness—not one word of their holy import, probably, made the slightest impression upon her heart; the beauty of the music, and perhaps the general solemn character of the sacred song, alone she heeded.

Seated so confidently at her father's feet, whom she dearly prized, with everything pleasant around her, youth, health, beauty, and hope so strong within her, how could she wish for "earthly joys" to "pass away," as the hymn expressed it? or, with such a bright world as she imagined before her, how could she now realize the words "Dark is the wilderness!"

But the time might come when their import would be fully understood, and the remembrance of the evening she first sung those words, leaning so lovingly against the knee of her kind, honest father, surrounded by so many blessings, might chance to rise up in her memory like a dream of happiness which fades gradually away as day approaches. The words of the hymn may be still engraven there distinctly on her memory, and then, perhaps, experience of the world may have taught her their meaning, and with the teaching, however hard it may have been, if from the depths of her heart she can with confidence repeat the burden of that holy song, "Jesus is mine!" then little will it matter whether joy or sorrow has been her portion!

CHAPTER XXI.

BUT we have made a long digression from the subject in question.

Lion, the huge mastiff, who had hitherto laid quietly at the feet of his young mistress, now began to give signs that he heard approaching footsteps, and soon he bounded off, returning very shortly, accompanied by Julian and his sister.

“So we have found you at last!—a pretty dance you have given us, Miss Sylvia,” were Julian’s words, as he emerged from the thick plantation which served as a back-ground to the sylvan reception-room.

"Ah, pretty Violet, you here?" he continued, "I thought I heard a nightingale singing, as I walked up the wood; but it is something bonnier, I see, than the little brown bird."

It was nothing new to Violet to have compliments paid to her beauty; ever since she was born, she had seldom been addressed without some note of admiration affixed to her name.

"Pretty Violet" or "little beauty" was her most common appellation. The girl was far from vain. Perhaps, conscious beauty had been her safe-guard — she was so perfectly aware that she possessed it, and

"It so falls out

That what we have, we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it."

Had not her beauty made her early conspicuous, poor child—the little wonder of the country side, the lion of the village and neighbourhood? Many a visit was paid to the blacksmith's cottage, to catch a glimpse of the Brooklands Violet.

But she blushed now rosy red at this speech of Julian's, and rose, making him a sort of little shy curtesy, saying, while she held out

her hand, "I am very glad to see you, Mr Julian."

He took the little hand, shaking it affectionately, and said :

"I should have called to see you and Mrs Miller yesterday, but was obliged to ride to Ashton Park, and was detained there till late ; but sit down, pray, you little queen of song and beauty, and let me hear the last verses of the sweet ditty you were singing."

Violet obeyed, and resuming her guitar, began immediately ; but her voice was not so assured as usual ; at first it trembled a little, although by degrees it recovered firmness as she proceeded.

Julian had not seen Violet for six months, and in that time she had changed considerably ; she was beginning to lose her childish appearance.

A more lovely picture than she presented at this moment could not be imagined. Her dress was picturesque in the extreme ; Mrs Miller scorned the usual attire of girls of Violet's grade of life ; indeed she looked even with contempt on the dress of both Sylvia and Mary, often declaring that if it were not that the French maid had certainly a stylish way of

fitting the young ladies, and that Miss Vernon was an aristocratic-looking girl, those gingham and muslins they wore in summer were the most paltry, cheap things that could be bought.

The Ladies Lyle were always sending boxes full of odds and ends to the cottage, well knowing their nurse's taste for finery ; so Mrs Miller had plenty of scope for the indulgence of her fancy.

Kindly meant, but most injudicious, was the plan of thus giving Violet many a dress quite unfit for her to wear, to say nothing of bonnets, ribbons, and every sort of etcetera. Often when Sylvia and her step-sister walked to church in their pretty unostentatious light muslin dresses and straw bonnets, Violet rustled past them in a rich silk, and a bonnet which had evidently been intended for and worn at some public breakfast or at Kensington Gardens ; and though she could not look otherwise than lovely in any dress, she would, on the principle of "beauty when unadorned being adorned the most," have been much more charming in simple attire.

But on this day her costume was very becoming ; she wore a rose-coloured skirt, a full white muslin body, close up to her throat, and

over it a little low bodice of black velvet, open and laced in front, in the Swiss fashion ; the sleeves of white muslin, looped up with a button, displaying, almost to the elbow, the plump, small arm, a large straw hat completing the costume, round which the girl had twined a most beautiful wreath, composed of blue-bells and primroses. She was particularly handy with her fingers, and her mother gloried in the talent she displayed in any fanciful work of personal decoration, little heeding her uselessness in shirt-making, or any of the commoner, but more necessary, duties for a girl of her grade.

Julian gazed upon this beautiful little creature with a degree of admiration quite new to him. This child, whom he had played with as a toy, as long almost as he could remember, had suddenly changed entirely in her aspect towards him ; no longer was she the little Violet of former days, but a girl—almost a woman—and, oh, how lovely !

“ Her eyes, her lips, her cheeks, her shape, her features, seem to be drawn by Love’s own hand, by Love himself in love.”

Our readers perhaps imagine we are describing a sort of ideal image—some faultless

mortal who never could have existed—but it is not so. Once or twice perhaps in the course of a long life we have been startled by beauty such as our eyes had never dreamt of beholding, and probably never will behold again. In our opinion, there is not in these times as many wonders in the way of beauty, as in the days when a lovely duchess or countess attracted the attention of crowds of admiring spectators, who accounted it a boon to catch but a transient glance of her beautiful face as she passed quickly through the streets, or to her carriage. Moderate good looks are perhaps more common than formerly; the dress of the present day is generally more becoming,—young ladies with but a moderate share of prettiness pass muster uncommonly well,—and that is quite sufficient, we think, for every purpose; indeed, extreme beauty may perhaps be reckoned a misfortune. Even in the highest ranks it is, as the poet says :

————— “but a vain and doubtful good,
A shining gloss that fadeth suddenly,
A flower that dies when first it 'gins to bud,
A brittle glass that 's broken presently :
A doubtful good, a glass, a flower,
Lost, broken, faded, dead within an hour.”

And if it prove a snare to those who by edu-

cation and position are fenced around with every safeguard, what must it be to the less favoured—to a poor girl like Violet, with such a mother as she was so unfortunate as to possess?

Julian leant against a tree, lost in contemplation of the fair minstrel as she warbled forth her song—Mary, standing by her brother's side, listening with the pleased attention Violet's beautiful voice always elicited.

When she ceased singing they both turned to look for Sylvia, but neither she nor Lion were to be seen.

"Where is Sylvia?" Julian exclaimed, in some consternation and much annoyance; "how tiresome she is! what can have become of her again, I wonder?"

"I don't think Miss Vernon is quite well to-day," Violet interposed.

"Why, what's the matter?" Julian inquired quickly.

"She said," replied Violet, looking rather mystified, "that she had an evil spirit upon her like Saul, and she brought me here to charm it out of her, as David did out of the wicked king."

Julian and Mary laughed.

"And," she continued, "just now, when I was talking to her, she looked so odd, suddenly, and —" But just then, remembering what she had been saying at that moment, she stopped abruptly, and blushed so painfully, that Mary said :

"I hope you did not vex Sylvia, Violet."

"Indeed, I said nothing to vex her, Miss Mary," she replied, eagerly. "I only said—"

But again she stopped, covered with confusion.

"Never mind, pretty one! what you said," Julian interposed, hastily; "I suppose we must go off in search of this runaway; let me carry away the guitar;" and they all wended their way homewards.

Sylvia had, unobserved by the brother and sister, left the wood. They had stood rather turned from her, but still she could plainly perceive every expression of their countenances. She saw they were wholly absorbed by Violet, and in Julian's face admiration was unmistakably depicted.

With one of those ungovernable impulses which she had never yet learned totally to repress, she had started up and fled rapidly down the hill leading from the wood, accom-

panied by her faithful companion, Lion, and scarcely slackened her pace until she reached the gates of the rectory.

“Ah, dear Lion,” she said, as, stopping for a moment to recover breath, she patted the head of the animal who kept so pertinaciously by her side, “*you* never desert me, nor care for any one so well as your mistress ;” and tears fell from her eyes.

“But what will mamma say?” Sylvia continued to muse, as she now slowly ascended the slight acclivity which led to the house. “How foolish of me to leave the wood ! I dare say they will all be angry, or rather vexed, with me, but I could not help it ; oh, that I were more patient, more gentle ! What will Julian think of me ?”

And full of compunction for her intemperate ebullition, she, with a hesitating hand, opened the glass door leading into the hall, and there at once encountered Mrs Vernon, who had just returned from seeing Mrs Martha comfortably seated at tea in the housekeeper’s room. She well knew that her old friend would enjoy this sacred meal—prized by nurses, we believe, beyond all others—much more without the *gène* of drawing-room society, and with those be-

fore whom she might have her cup filled and re-filled to her heart's content.

"Why, Sylvia, you are sooner home than I expected; where are Julian and Mary?" were Mrs Vernon's words on perceiving her. Sylvia could not speak; she only coloured and looked confused. "Is anything the matter?" asked Mrs Vernon, quite alarmed.

"No, mamma, nothing, but—" and she threw her arms round Mrs Vernon's neck.

"Oh! I have been so foolish, so childish, I know you will be very angry, and despise me for being so weak and violent."

"Pray don't agitate yourself in this manner, Sylvia; come with me into my sitting-room, and tell me what has happened."

And Mrs Vernon led her weeping daughter to her own little sanctum, and seated by her side on the sofa, Sylvia sobbed forth her humiliating record of the last hour, leaning confidently her head upon the shoulder of her gentle mother.

She told how she had been in the first instance hurt by Mrs Martha's words, "She does not belong to you!" and the cold manner in which they were spoken. "Very absurd, mamma, I know you will think it, for

no doubt the old woman did not mean to offend me, but I cannot bear to think I do not quite belong to you all; that I am so different, with my dark eyes and hair, standing alone in the family, showing so plainly that I am not *your* child—even little Arthur, my father's own boy, seeming to scorn to show he is my brother by his blue eyes and light curls. Ah, I see you are laughing at me, mamma; in your heart how sorry you must be that you have such a foolish daughter! And you have not heard the worst part of my story."

"I hope I have, dear Sylvia. I quite agree with you that what you have already told me is a foolish, unamiable idea of yours; but, at the same time, I must confess that the love it expresses for me is something so flattering to my heart, that, though I am forced to condemn the feeling, and to implore you to get rid of it as a weakness unworthy of so sensible a girl, yet I must forgive it, my darling Sylvia;" and Mrs Vernon tenderly kissed her.

"Oh, but, mamma, dearest mamma, you know not all. Now you really will be thoroughly vexed with me, for I will tell you everything—my thoughts even, and then—"

She paused, and sighed heavily.

“ I am almost too much ashamed to tell you,” she went on at length, turning away her head, “ but I suppose it must be done. Well!—I saw that Julian and Mary were so occupied with the old nurse, that they took no heed of me, so I set off as fast as I could with Lion towards the wood. Whilst passing the cottage, I saw Violet, as usual, sitting in the porch twanging her guitar. I believe she never does anything else from morning till night. I thought I would take her with me, so went in for her, and that tiresome mother allowed her to go, although she wanted me to wait—whilst she did out her hair, as she calls it—what a horrid woman she is, mamma ! ”

“ There again, Sylvia, always in extremes, exaggerated even in your epithets,” interposed Mrs Vernon.

“ Well, but you know she *is* horrid, mamma. I only wonder Violet is not more silly than she is ; however, I took her off, and we went to the drawing-room in the wood, and I made her sing to me ; but first of all she must make a wreath of wild flowers for her straw hat, conceited little creature ! But how beautiful, certainly, she is ! ”

And Sylvia sighed disconsolately.

“ That mother of hers had dressed her in a new costume, a sort of Swiss peasant’s dress, which became her mightily. Seated as she was, surrounded by those flowers, on a mossy seat in that beautiful place, the sun shining through the trees so brightly upon her, really I could not help being struck by her wonderful loveliness ; at last the wreath was finished, and the hat put jauntily on, on one side, but not before she had talked a great deal of nonsense, I can assure you ; and then she began to sing, and oh ! mamma, what a voice she has ! ”

“ It is, indeed, a beautiful little pipe ; poor child ! I sometimes think, in my blindness no doubt, that she would be better without a gift which will, I fear, prove only an additional incentive to vanity.”

“ Yes, so I think,” said Sylvia, much excited ; “ what good can it do to a blacksmith’s daughter to be so beautiful, or so highly gifted with musical talents ? ”

“ But, Sylvia, we must recollect who made her both in mind and body ; no talent or gift is bestowed without a purpose.”

“ No, certainly, I suppose not,” continued Sylvia, with a sigh. “ Well, mamma, whilst she

was in the middle of a song, Julian with Mary appeared. He scarcely noticed me, except to say that I had led them a dance; he seemed struck with Violet, just as if he had seen her for the first time. He was so kind and affectionate to her—called her “pretty Violet,” and all sorts of pet names—made her sing, and stood leaning against a tree, with his eyes fixed immovably upon her. Oh, mamma, I cannot describe the sensation which shot into my heart; it was, I fear, something very dreadful, a mixture of anger, hatred, and despair. I scarcely know why, for, poor Violet! can she help being so lovely, and how is it possible for Julian or any one else not to admire her?”

Whilst Sylvia thus rapidly spoke, had she looked into Mrs Vernon’s face, she would have seen that it grew pale, and that an anxious expression usurped the generally placid character of her countenance. A weight had indeed fallen on her heart in the form of a care for the future, which had never before suggested itself.

Oh, it is a blissful time when our sons and daughters are children, a period of peaceful enjoyment which, whilst it lasts, we seldom estimate to its full extent. The scene changes

when childhood departs ; to the tender cares of infancy succeed anxieties of a heavier nature. It was an awakening to the mother, the disagreeable thoughts with which Sylvia's words had shaken her imagination—the first glimpse of coming days, which caused a spasm of pain to strike through her heart as Sylvia related this little scene, and she contemplated her darling son exposed to all the dangers of his age, in a world into which he was about to launch, so inexperienced, so pure-minded. She had never thought of him hitherto but as the solace and comfort of her life ; had never before had the idea that he was human, that he would be a man indeed, with all the passions of a man.

But Mrs Vernon's was a faithful, trusting heart. She repressed her rising apprehensions, and talked long to her dearly loved young daughter, endeavouring to impress upon her mind how greatly it would increase her happiness if she acquired more self-command, telling her plainly that she felt certain that, although Julian loved her already most sincerely, she would gain more influence over his affection if she were more calm and equable in her ways.

“Men, in general,” Mrs Vernon continued,

and we must now begin to consider our Julian in the light of a young man, "are most inclined to admire all that is gentle and soft in woman; gentleness ought to be the personification of our sex. Their presence ought to inspire a feeling of peace and repose, not wrath; and remember, Sylvia, you are now almost a woman."

When Julian and Mary returned to the rectory, heated and discomfited by this wild-goose search after her, they found Sylvia quietly seated close to Mrs Martha, who was installed in an arm-chair in the drawing-room, little Arthur on her knee. She seemed to be making herself very agreeable to the old nurse, who, though she stroked with much tenderness the fair head of the little boy, yet looked with admiration upon the dark flowing locks and brilliant eyes of the handsome daughter of the good man she had already learnt to revere.

CHAPTER XXII.

NURSE MARTHA spent the next day most happily. The affectionate attentions she received from every member of the family were truly gratifying to her.

Mrs Vernon drove her out in her little pony carriage into the grounds of Lyle Court, and on their way thither, on passing the cottage, they saw Violet leaning, as she too often did, against the garden gate, idly looking out upon the road. "I must show you our village beauty," said Mrs Vernon, as she stopped and called Violet to her side, and presently Mrs Miller, who was in the garden, bustled up also, simpering and mincing out her salutations. Mrs Martha's

gaze fixed itself upon the beautiful face of Violet, and after they drove on she said :

“ Indeed, my dear lady, my eyes never lighted upon anything so lovely ; only one face have I ever seen like it, and that is one I often look at, in a picture which Mr Jerrold has in his room ; it is of an angel, painted by, I think he told me, Raphael. I am quite learned in pictures now ; poor Mr Jerrold thinks and talks so much about them, they being his only amusement. The one I mean is certainly strikingly like that young girl—just the same golden hair, the same perfect features, those parted lips and that beautifully formed mouth and heavenly eyes, as hers looked when she turned them up towards your face ; she is truly a sweet-looking creature, and seems innocent and good.”

“ And so she is, poor child, at present ! ” Mrs Vernon answered, with a sigh.

“ Yes,” continued the old woman, “ I know why you sigh ; that beauty will be a hard trial to her, and I don’t much like the looks of the mother—God forgive me for my bad thoughts.”

“ Indeed, I fear she is a very foolish woman ; her father is an excellent, honest man, but I believe has little influence over his household.”

* * * *

That evening Julian had a little walk alone with his father's nurse; he led her into the churchyard to look upon a grave with a handsome marble slab, surrounded by railings, which had been substituted for the humble gravestone that had before marked the resting-place of the last Julian Hope.

This had been done by Mr Vernon, his step-son related to Mrs Martha, as one of the many acts of kindness and consideration which he never wearied in bestowing upon them all. Nurse Martha, before she left Brooklands the next day, had the satisfaction of seeing this excellent friend to those in whom she felt so tender an interest; Mr Vernon arrived by an early train, and the welcome he received from the whole family was a token of how much he was beloved.

Mr Vernon was a tall, slight man of about fifty years old. From him it was plainly visible that Sylvia had derived her dark hair and eyes; indeed, she resembled her father greatly in features, but the expression was very different. There was a peculiarly calm and gentle air pervading his countenance, a contrast to the vivacious sparkle of his young daughter's face. But time may have changed

him, and a life devoted to the duties of his calling has softened the fire of those dark eyes which never now fell but with the mildest radiance on any one. He was truly beloved by his flock ; of him justly they might say :

“ We venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.”

“ Yes, Mr Jerrold,” said the old nurse, as she sat beside the invalid relating every little incident of her delightful expedition, “ it has, indeed, been new life to me, these three last days—something bright to think of for the remainder of my old life. I sometimes fancy it cannot all be true, but a beautiful dream, a fairy story ! that pretty place, and such a parsonage I never before beheld. But I believe Mr Vernon, who is well to do, has added a room here and there, as it was required, so it is quite a large house—rather irregular-looking—but you, sir, would call it picturesque, with its gable ends painted black and white, like the cottages in the village, and the garden so pretty ; and then those children, Mr Jerrold, those happy, beautiful children ! ”

“ It is indeed pleasant, Martha, to hear all

this, but go on, you have not told me half that I want to hear."

"Oh, for that matter, I might go on for ever," continued the nurse. "As for Julian, he is exactly like his father, but stronger-looking in all ways, has a firm look, more decision in his eye, in the lines of his mouth!—you see at once that his has been a wholesome bringing up, less soft than his dear father's, no weak indulgence or luxury to unfit him for struggling through life and its temptations. No, there is something in the expression of his countenance that tells the beholder that he has that within him which will enable him to fight the good fight, and manfully conquer even the deceitfulness of his own heart. Yes, those who live to see it will, I know, have cause to be proud of that youth."

"And the girl, good Martha, what of her?"

"She is a dear little girl, mild and gentle as a dove; she has been delicate from her birth, poor child;—born, some months after her father's death, in misery and sorrow; but they say she gains strength every year; she will be pretty, I think, some of these days, when less pale and thin. But, Mr Jerrold, Miss Sylvia, what a splendid creature she is!"

“Mr Vernon’s daughter?” said Jerrold, with less eagerness.

“Yes, that dear, good man’s daughter!” continued Martha with great enthusiasm; “that man who has been a friend, a father to your cousins and their mother, when all their blood-relations forsook them; who has been the means, with God’s blessing, of making them what they are now, good and happy : how they all love and venerate him, and no wonder ! And that Sylvia, to see her adoration of her step-mother, it is something wonderful. She is a droll young lady,” and Martha laughed ; “do you know, she is so tenacious of being thought not to be quite one of them, and was quite offended even with me when I said, on first meeting the young party, something about her not being a Hope. How could I think her one, with those dark locks and eyes ? such eyes !—why, they sparkle like the stars on a frosty night. She is a pretty creature, with her tall stature, and graceful little head ; and she forgave me, dear child, for my speech very soon, and was as loving and kind to me as any one of them.”

“And my aunt, how does she look ?” inquired Jerrold.

“Miss Mary? I beg her pardon, Mrs Vernon—I never saw any one less altered by time; fair-complexioned people look young longer than those who are darker skinned, and after all she is only thirty-seven; poor young creature!—she was barely seventeen when she took that imprudent step—eloped with Mr Julian! Since her second marriage she has led so calm and happy a life, that she must have recovered her health and spirits. Mr Vernon seems to dote upon her, loving her children quite as dearly as his own, and doing everything kind and generous by them; oh, he is a man at whose feet I could have almost fallen, to thank him for what he has done for those so dear to my lost darling!”

“I quite enter into your feelings, dear Martha; and I also feel the deepest gratitude towards Mr Vernon, and long to tell him so,” replied Jerrold.

It was now the great object of Jerrold’s life to see his cousins, to have them, as it were, domesticated at Lilford Towers, and immediately on his father’s return home he commenced the subject.

He told him, fearlessly, what he had done; how he had sent Nurse Martha to reconnoitre,



and bring back some account of the family, and then related all she had told him, and the impression his uncle Julian's children had made upon her.

Mr Hope listened attentively to his son's recital, and Jerrold was surprised at the manner in which his father received a communication so likely, he imagined, to offend him. His grave, stern countenance assumed no darker looks; he was silent for some time, and then said, "This, certainly, is an extraordinary step for you to have taken, Jerrold; one that I should not have sanctioned had I been consulted; however, as it has been done, I shall say no more about it."

"Oh, my dear father!" exclaimed the poor invalid, with extreme excitement, "I trust you will say a great deal more about it; oh, say that you will allow me to see my cousins, to have the only happiness I expect in this world. For years now this has been the sole pleasure I have had in anticipation; my cousins require nothing from you—the excellent man my uncle's widow married has taken your place, and provides nobly for the boy, who, in all probability, must be your heir—the future owner of this property."

Mr Hope evidently winced at these words ; and a spasm, as of pain, crossed his countenance.

“Yes, to a stranger’s generosity a Hope owes everything, whilst his uncle disowns him,” Jerrold continued, becoming much agitated. “Oh, father, I beseech you, if you have any regard for your unfortunate son, grant his prayer ; send for that boy, let me see something I can love, can be proud of, before I die ; some one who is worthy to perpetuate our name. Dear father, you have always been kind and indulgent to your poor crippled son, so hear me now, I implore you,” and Jerrold clasped his thin white hands in earnest entreaty.

A very few days after this conversation between Jerrold Hope and his father, the post brought a letter to Mrs Vernon, the contents of which seemed to disturb her greatly. Mr Vernon, busily employed in reading his own despatches, did not observe his wife’s agitated countenance, nor did he make any remark when she rose and left the breakfast-table.

“My mother has had some bad news, I fear,” said Julian, addressing his step-father.

Sylvia started up with the intention of fly-

ing to Mrs Vernon ; but her father interposed.

“ No, Sylvia, I will go to her,” he said, and immediately went to seek his wife.

He found her in her sitting-room, weeping bitterly ; much alarmed, he inquired into the cause of this distress.

“ You will think me very weak and foolish to be thus affected by the contents of this letter, but I cannot help it,” she said, placing it in his hands.

It ran as follows :

“ Lilford Towers,

“ May 1st, —

“ Dear Madam,

“ I wish in all sincerity to become acquainted with your son, my nephew, Julian Hope, and shall feel obliged by your allowing him to visit me as soon as possible. His cousin Jerrold is most anxious to make his acquaintance. I must also request to be allowed to fulfil all those pecuniary duties henceforth for him, which have hitherto been so generously performed by your husband, Mr Vernon. I understand Julian is at Oxford. Every expense of his education in future I

must be permitted to defray. It is my earnest wish that the past should be buried in oblivion.

“ I remain, dear Madam,

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ ALEXANDER HOPE.”

“ I know I ought rather to rejoice,” continued Mrs Vernon, whilst her husband was perusing the letter; “ I ought to be thankful that so great a load is taken from you; but I cannot forget the past. At this moment, the remembrance of all that cruel man’s cold unkindness to Julian’s father fills my heart with such bitter feelings that, God forgive me when I say it, I cannot endure the idea of my son receiving anything from his hands. It has been so delightful to owe all to you, my generous, kind, and beloved husband ! ”

But Mr Vernon spoke, and his soothing words, as they ever did, soon calmed the tempest at her heart, and convinced her better judgment on the subject.

The next day a letter was despatched to Lilford Towers from Mr Vernon. It ran as follows :

“ Brooklands Rectory,

“ May 12th, —

“ Sir,

“ I am deputed by Mrs Vernon to inform you that her son Julian Hope will wait upon you on Monday, the 26th instant, should that day suit you to receive him.

“ With regard to the pecuniary arrangement to which you allude, I beg to say the discussion of the subject need not yet be definitely decided upon. I can only say that for many years it has been one of the greatest sources of satisfaction to me, the power I have had of promoting the advantage of my much-beloved step-son.

“ I do not, however, hesitate to allow that from your near relationship your claims to assist your nephew are very great; but I entreat you to understand that I am still quite ready to go on to the end with the labour of love I have so long and so joyfully undertaken.

“ I remain, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ ARTHUR VERNON.”

And so it was to be; in a fortnight Julian was to depart for Lilford Towers.

[illegible]

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Glenmores had not been at Lyle Court for some time ; Lady Violet was married, and the Marquis on the continent, so the party was reduced in number.

Lord Victor, however, accompanied his mother. He had left Eton, under not very favourable auspices ; indeed, his friends had been recommended to remove him at once, to prevent the most unpleasant consequences ; and from Oxford he was all but expelled. We regret to say that both at school and at college a repellent vice seemed to be habitual to his nature, fortunately not at all usual in the

present day in the character of a scion of nobility, which made it necessary that he should be removed from the university.

Lord Victor was a most precocious youth in every respect. His frame promised to be gigantic in its proportions; his face, with his dark eyes and hair, peculiarly striking, from its beauty of feature and colouring. When first the eye beheld him, unqualified admiration was the impression of every one; but the charm soon vanished when more intimate acquaintance with the countenance, and its unpleasant varying expressions, showed forth indications of a spirit within which it made the beholder quail to think of.

How would it be with him when time went on, and the boy became the man, with all those passions, now so forcibly delineated, matured by years into their full intensity?

Lady Glenmore, the most indulgent, and, we are obliged to confess, the weakest of mothers, was completely led captive by her love for this her youngest child. On his expulsion from Oxford, she determined, until Lord Glenmore's return, to keep him at home

under the charge of a tutor, and she was not fortunate in her choice of one.

The Rev. Mr Fanshaw was a gentleman by birth and education, but his small means obliged him to work in some way. His tastes were naturally luxurious and refined, and, as he was obliged to be a tutor, his great aim was to obtain a post of as little trouble as possible, in an establishment where he could live the life of a gentleman, and with the hope of the position leading to future preferment. It mattered little to him what became of his pupil, so that he could persuade him to accomplish, each day, a very moderate amount of study; and he was lucky, he thought, in obtaining a situation in which his views on these points were so completely realized.

Victor Lyle wanted not quickness of parts, and he was only too glad to strike a bargain with his tutor, that if he studied two hours every morning, he would not bother him further during the day. So everything went on very smoothly with the supine Mr Fanshaw and his independent pupil.

Lady Glenmore considered that it was her most prudent course to leave London, and fix herself at Lyle Court, hoping that, in that

comparatively secluded home, her wild darling would be secure from every temptation. *Every temptation !* poor mistaken mother ! she never remembered that it is the state of the heart which determines the moral character. “ Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good also.”

In vain could Lady Glenmore hope to preserve her son from vice, whether in the busy world, surrounded by all its allurements to sin, or amidst the tranquil glories of the country, unless she sought to cleanse and purify the fount from whence proceeds all evil.

He delighted in Lyle Court, where amusements of every kind abounded—such capital fishing and shooting when the season commenced, and he could keep his hand well in till September, by destroying the rabbits. Then the stud, which was always kept under the *surveillance* of Frank Miller, what a choice of horses he should have, both for driving and for riding !

“ I shall have some fellows down, and make them tolerably jolly, I think,” he said to his trusty confidant, Tom Jones, the morning after his arrival.

“ Oh, yes, you’ll have rare fun, I am sure, my Lord ; but Mr Fanshaw, your tutor, won’t he be

always poking his nose about, and interfering in everything?"

"Not he; do you think I am such a fool as not to be able to manage him, Tom?" was the indignant answer. "We have come to an understanding, and after twelve o'clock he is never to cross my path."

"You are a first-rate clever young 'un," Tom admiringly remarked. "But, my Lord," he added, "I should like to know, is Mr Julian Hope still to have the run of our stables, and ride and drive what horses he pleases? Already he has at the rectory the finest hack ever broke in these stables, just such a one as you would have liked—a present from the Marquis; but still he comes in and out, picks and chooses, and rides anything he pleases, and thinks nothing of having the trap whenever it suits him to drive to Selbourne.

Lord Victor crimsoned, and a very savage look gleamed from his eyes.

"No!—catch him at such work whilst I am here."

"But his Lordship left positive orders that Mr Julian was to have what he pleased—do what he liked in our stables; and Mr Miller would give him the skin off his back, if he

asked for it, and Mr Miller is master here, I can tell you."

"We'll see; Miller master here, when I am at Lyle Court? I'll soon teach him who is master," and the young lord ended this speech with an oath we should be sorry to record. "I wish that fellow, whom I hate like poison, was not here; it takes away all my pleasure in being at the Court," Victor continued, waxing more and more indignant. "Have you seen him since you came down?"

"Oh yes, I saw him yesterday, leaning over the cottage gate, talking to pretty Miss Violet. Lawk! how handsome she is grown!" was Tom's reply.

"He was, was he, talking to Violet?" and Victor's eyes actually blazed. Even Tom Jones rather quailed at the expression which he had striven to produce. The demon he had done his best to conjure up was more terrific even than he was prepared for, and rather appalled him by its fierceness.

"But you need not mind; I hear this wonderful piece of perfection—this Paragon, I believe they call it,—I know we once had a mare by that name—is going off in a fortnight."

"I am glad to hear it," the youth replied

between his clenched teeth, "for perhaps I may be able to keep my hands off him for that time ; but as sure as I stand here, if I catch him poaching in my concerns, whether in the stables or elsewhere, I'll break every bone in his skin."

"Better not dirty your fingers by touching him, my Lord ; and to tell you the truth, it would be dangerous work meddling with him, for though he has a pale face, and looks so tall and slight-like, I have heard that he has plenty of pluck in him, for all he looks so mild. What a cricketer he seems to be ! In short, a clever hand at everything," Tom added, looking sideways at Lord Victor. "By the by, my Lord, arn't we to have some matches ?"

"Not till that fellow is gone," was the sulky answer.

"And, my Lord, have you heard how he has lit upon his legs ?"

"What do you mean ?"

"Why, do you see—Mrs Vernon's maid, who is a crony of Mrs Evans's it seems, picked up at the rectory that Mr Julian had been sent for by his uncle, who lives at that great place, Lilford Towers ; and an old nurse that was here told them he was to be the heir

of that great fortune; the still-room maid, who is a sweetheart of mine, overheard Mrs Thompson telling of this to our housekeeper, and in course told me."

"That fellow has the devil's own luck; I don't remember the time when I did not hate him, and now I suppose he will be a greater demi-god than ever, with every one."

"He'll never beat you, my Lord, depend upon that, and if I were you I would not pick a quarrel with him; let him be off in peace—it will only make a row—a fortnight will soon be over, and then you reign supreme, as they say. And, there, I sees the very party in question, with the young ladies, coming this way; I say, Lord Victor," nudging familiarly the young Lord, "isn't that Miss Vernon a clipper?"

"Then I shall be off," said Lord Victor; "I could not meet him at this moment without knocking him down. I hate that girl too."

"Now, remember what I told you, my Lord, 'two can play at that game;' depend upon it, he's dangerous, has the courage of a lion and the science of a *pet*. I have heard a story or two of him from a chum of mine in London, who was something or other about the

school he was at ; even there he was famous for everything he had a mind to do."

Victor Lyle slunk away. That youth, so highly gifted by nature and position, was ready to exclaim, " Yet all this availeth me nothing, as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

CHAPTER XXIV.

“Now, Violet, listen to what I say,” said Mrs Miller to her daughter ; “none of your affected airs and graces, if you please, when Lord Victor comes. Remember you ought to be proud of his notice, so kind as he is, and to think of all the beautiful presents he gives you!”

“I don’t care for his presents,” Violet said, in a very dejected tone of voice ; “and I am too old to be kissed by him, father says.”

“I never heard such rubbish in the whole course of my life ; a brat like you to talk so, upon my word. I don’t know what the world will come to at last !” exclaimed the incensed mother.

"But Mr Julian never kisses me, never gives me any fine presents, yet I am fonder of a flower from him than"—

"Hold your tongue, you bad child, talking in that manner about young gentlemen—Mr Julian, indeed! I wonder what they would say at the rectory if they were to hear you; they, who are a prouder set by far than the Court people; and Miss Sylvia, would she not scratch your eyes out?"

Poor Violet began to cry most piteously.

"What are you crying about?" said Mrs Miller, longing in her heart to give Violet a good shaking; but with an effort restraining her hands and her temper, she added, coaxingly, wiping away the tears that were streaming down her cheeks, "you silly little beauty, I did not mean to scold you."

"Don't call me 'beauty,' I hate the name;—oh, I wish I were not beautiful!" Violet exclaimed, petulantly. "I wish from my heart I was ugly, and then"—

"What then?" asked her mother.

"That odious boy would never speak to me again."

Mrs Miller was thunder-struck. What was she to do? Any moment Lord Victor

might be there, and to find her in that mood!

"My darling, my precious child!" she said, beseechingly, "I beg and entreat you not to talk in this manner; you know how kind Lady Glenmore and all the family have been to me. What should I have done without them, and what would her Ladyship say if you were to be rude to her darling boy, and my darling boy, whom I nursed in these arms from the moment of his birth, whom I love as my own child, he who ought to be considered by you quite in the light of a dear brother?"

And here Mrs Miller began whimpering.

"You cut me to the heart, my pet, to hear you talk of him in this way; he who will, I dare say, soon be here, so happy at the thoughts of seeing us all again; and to meet with a cold reception from you, to whom he has always been so generous!"—

"But my father says"—

"Don't tell me the nonsense your father says," angrily broke in Mrs Miller, "just as if I didn't know the world much better than he does; what does he understand about the ways of the nobility? I only tell you this, Violet," and Mrs Miller waxed exceeding wroth, "that if

you don't behave yourself, it will be the worse for both you and your precious father, the silly, ignorant man! Now go up-stairs, and wash your eyes;—a pretty figure you look, after all my pains in dressing you so nicely! There, go now, my own dearest, darling, sweetest pet," the mother continued, changing her harsh tone of displeasure into the most wheedling whine, "my treasure and delight, who would not, I know, vex her poor Mimmie."

And Violet, with slow, heavy steps, ascended the stairs which led to her little bed-room, her young heart very unusually oppressed, while Mrs Miller sat down deep in meditation.

"Yes," she thought, "I have trouble enough before me, I plainly see; that girl will require management; Frank must have dust thrown in his eyes by some means or other, or he will be an eternal spoke in the wheel; he, poor groveling creature with no ambition, would gladly see his beautiful daughter married to a coarse farmer, or forsooth, perhaps, to the son of the A—— butcher, so that he was a *worthy man*! I look for better things for *my* child than a worthy man;—what else could be the good of possessing a beautiful daughter? Have there

not been duchesses and countesses and marchionesses elevated to the peerage far beneath her in all ways? No, I have made up my mind, and when once that's done I generally gain my point. It ought to be so easy, but I have such a set of fools to deal with. What a lovely creature that child is, so much improved since he last saw her! I know one who thinks so too; one not so despicable either; but, no, the peerage for me, and I can do anything I like with him, the dear boy! I know the length of his foot, as they say, handsome fellow! But here he comes; I wonder whether that stupid girl has made herself decent."

A hasty step was heard on the gravel walk, the door burst open, and Victor stood before his nurse, who, clasping him in her arms, commenced a volley of endearing and flattering ejaculations. "You are not offended with your old nurse for receiving you with open arms, you darling of all darlings; but, oh! when I look upon you and see what a fine creature you have become, I fear your Lordship will think I am taking a great liberty: a man, indeed, you are," she continued, surveying the youth from head to foot, with a countenance in which ecstatic admiration was expressed;

“and such a man, the handsomest and finest my eyes ever beheld.”

“Where’s Violet?” asked the youth, without heeding the honeyed words of Mrs Miller.

“Oh, she is up-stairs : Violet !” she called, going to the door, “Lord Victor is here, make haste down !”

“Well, Rose, and what’s the news? what have you been about lately? how is Violet looking?”

“Well, pretty well, I think; and as to what we have been about, not much; we always go on in the same jog-trot style; Violet gets on wonderfully with her music, and as for her voice, I think that will make her fortune.”

“And she plays upon this, does she not?” he asked, taking up the guitar, and passing his finger over the strings. “But why does she not come?”

“I’ll go and see,” Mrs Miller said, and bustled up-stairs.

“Violet !” she said in an undertone, as she entered the girl’s little chamber, with a look upon her countenance very different to the dulcet one she wore down-stairs, “come down this moment.”

Violet had no choice but to obey.

“You’ll behave properly, do you hear?” the mother said, in that sinister voice her daughter well understood; and after giving a few touches to her dress and hair, Mrs Miller desired the unwilling girl to follow her downstairs.

CHAPTER XXV.

LADY HELENA and Lady Sophia Lyle were the most unsophisticated, amiable girls, prizing the country and its enjoyments far beyond the amusements and excitement of fashionable life. Lyle Court had ever been their terrestrial paradise, and they always hailed their return there with unqualified delight.

They loved Mrs Vernon sincerely, and were very fond of both Sylvia and Mary ; but Julian had always been their especial favourite, and the constant intercourse they had had with him during his school days in London made them look upon him with the affection of sisters.

They were perfectly aware of Victor's dislike to Julian Hope, and much of the pleasure they anticipated in their stay at the Court was spoiled by this idea.

The young party, whom Lord Victor had avoided, were on their way to the Court to ask Lady Glenmore, with her son and daughters, to dine with them that day at the rectory. Mr Fanshaw had not yet arrived, but was expected that evening. The invitation was gladly accepted by the Marchioness and the young ladies.

"Victor, I am sure, will be most happy also, tell Mrs Vernon, my dear Sylvia," Lady Glenmore said as they were departing. But she had reckoned without her host.

"Catch me going!" was the young lord's reply, when he came in to luncheon. "Tell Froissart," turning to the butler, "to have dinner for me and Mr Fanshaw at six o'clock, no later, for I wish to go out early."

"Indeed, Victor, you really must go; I have accepted the invitation for you, and it will be so very rude," pleaded his mother.

"I cannot help that, and I must beg, Lady Glenmore, that in future you will never accept invitations for me without my sanction."

The sisters looked at each other, and shrugged their shoulders.

“Well, but just this time, my dear boy, Mrs Vernon will think it so strange.”

“Hang Mrs Vernon!” was the reply.

“Really, Victor, this will never do,” said the discomposed lady; “I trust, at least, Mr Fanshaw will improve your manners, for they are past enduring.”

Victor went on eating his luncheon in dogged silence.

“And we were to have spent such a pleasant evening,—to have the pony carriages after dinner, and drink tea in the wood.”

“Oh, mamma, we can do very well without him!” exclaimed Lady Helena, “and so, I dare say, can Mrs Vernon.

Victor only sneered.

“Sylvia and I are going to the Cottage; have you any message, mamma?”

“You can tell Mrs Miller to come up and see me; and Sylvia and Mary talk so much about Violet’s singing, and playing on the guitar, that perhaps we had better take her with us to the wood this evening to play to us.”

The young ladies departed, too glad to escape from the presence of their young brother,

whose disagreeable ways had rendered him anything but an object of pleasure to them.

Lady Glenmore was left alone with her hopeful son, he still lingering over his luncheon; but he now vouchsafed to raise his eyes from his plate, and to say in a less morose tone of voice :

“ You may tell those rectory people that I will join them in the wood, and bring Fanshaw ; I can endure that, with plenty of elbow room to get out of the way of bores.”

As Lady Helena had said, the Vernon party were perfectly able to dispense with the society of Lord Victor, who was certainly no favourite with any one. As children, he and Sylvia had ever been at war, and she could not forget, nor I fear forgive, the manner in which he would fain have treated and spoken of Julian.

As for Julian, he really despised the young lord most thoroughly, and thought of him with no other feeling but indifference or contempt ; but for the sake of those he loved so well—Lady Glenmore, and the friend for whom he felt so strong an attachment, the kind Marquis—he made a firm resolve to bear to the very extent of endurance the petty taunts and ungentlemanly bearing of Lord Victor towards him.

"You need not fear, dear mother," he said to Mrs Vernon; "I know that young scamp thoroughly, and as I care as little for his words as for the idle winds that blow, I shall turn a deaf ear, as far as it is possible. I am not very irritable, you know; but of course I cannot let him go too far."

"And I have been talking to Sylvia," Mrs Vernon rejoined, "and begging her not to be too demonstrative in showing her dislike to him; her I cannot trust quite so well as I can you, my son."

"No, I should think not," answered Julian, laughing; "I wonder when she will learn to keep her feelings to herself."

"Sylvia is certainly open as the day," answered Mrs Vernon, "perhaps too much so for the world she lives in. The interests of society often render it expedient to repress the utterance of the whole truth; but I must confess that I think the most natural and attractive beauty is honesty and moral truth; to me her thoroughly ingenuous character is delicious; all her faults are on the surface, and even they are interesting to me, springing, as they do, from over much feeling."

"How fond you are of Sylvia, mother! I

sometimes feel inclined to be jealous, both for myself and Mary," Julian responded.

"But are you not also very fond of her?" inquired Mrs Vernon.

"Oh, yes, mother, very fond; I love her quite as much as if she were my own sister."

"And don't you think her very handsome?"

"Well, I suppose she is, but brothers never sufficiently appreciate their sisters' looks, I fancy."

Mrs Vernon's heart sunk.

"Why, mother, you look quite unhappy. I really do think Sylvia very handsome; her figure is, or will be, I suppose, very fine."

Mrs Vernon still did not look satisfied.

"Do you wish me to admire her so very much?" Julian asked, laughingly.

"Yes, Julian, it is *the dearest wish of my heart*," was the earnest answer.

Julian looked surprised, and turned his eyes upon his mother's face inquiringly. There was something in the expression there that startled him; he paused a moment, as if in thought, and then the crimson blood that flew to his temples showed at once that for the first time a new idea had darted through his brain.

At this moment a servant, entering to deliver some message, broke off the conversation, and Julian walked out of the open window on to the lawn, and from thence into a little sequestered walk, where he paced up and down for some time, meditating more gravely than he had ever done before.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was a pleasant, cheerful little dinner-party at the rectory. Lady Glenmore probably enjoyed herself much more without the presence of her wayward son, whose uncertain moods always gave her some uneasiness; keeping her always on the watch, lest by word or deed he should say or do something offensive to one of the company.

“ I think Julian is changed,” said Lady Helena to her particular friend Sylvia, as they walked together in the garden after dinner, whilst waiting for the carriages which were to convey some of the party to the wood.

“How do you mean?” inquired Sylvia, quickly.

“He looks so grave and abstracted, as if he had something on his mind,” returned Lady Helena; “perhaps he does not enjoy the thoughts of his visit to his uncle; and I am sure I do not wonder at it, for he is a most formidable-looking man; he was once pointed out to me at a dinner-party in London.”

“Julian has not expressed any dislike to the idea of going,” Sylvia replied, “but I did remark that he looked much graver than usual at dinner;” and Sylvia became herself abstracted whilst pondering on Julian. She now remembered that she had met him coming into the house when the dressing bell rang, and that on making some usual remark, instead of waiting to speak a few words to her, he had answered shortly, and ran up-stairs: and again, during dinner, several times when she had looked at him, she found that his eyes were fixed upon her in quite a strange manner; and once she saw that when he met her glance he coloured deeply. What could it mean—what was the matter? That morning they

had been the best of friends—how could she have offended him?

All her pleasure now vanished; she longed to fly to her mother, to consult with her as to the cause of this strange conduct in Julian, but that was impossible.

Should she ask him? She saw him coming out of the house, but her mind misgave her; there was something in the looks which she had detected Julian fixing upon her during dinner, so different from the careless, cheerful significance of his usual aspect towards her, which disturbed her woman's heart; they were looks of deep and thoughtful scrutiny—at one moment an expression of severity on his countenance, as if he were condemning her—at another one gentler, more affectionate—and once, oh! it was folly in her, conceit, to allow such an idea to enter her mind, and the girl blushed at the presumptuous idea—she thought he looked as if—he was admiring her! Perhaps he thought, “Sylvia looks better than usual this evening in that new muslin dress, and with her hair in braids instead of those childish ringlets.”

Well, however it might be, one thing is certain, that Mrs Vernon, wittingly or un-

wittingly, by those few words to her son had destroyed for ever the brotherly and sisterly intercourse which had before subsisted between Julian and Sylvia. For the first time, perhaps, in his life, he had been made to realize the idea that no tie of blood united them, that she was only his sister by name.

And his mother's words—what could they mean? Was it possible—the light which now began to break upon his mind, and which his fancy rejected? “Yes, I love her as a dear sister, but no more!” he ejaculated, his boyish taste reverting at that moment to the very different beauty of another—one so perfect in budding loveliness, that it would have been next to impossible that, at his susceptible age, he could wholly have escaped the fascination of her beauty.

Mrs Vernon, with the quick instinct of a woman, had soon seen into the transparent heart of her son. She did not fear ultimately for him, but she felt the time was come to employ some counteracting spell to occupy his thoughts, and carry them on to the future. She could even now rejoice that his visit to Lilford Towers would remove him for a time from Brooklands. The fact was, as it generally

happens when people are taken out of their sphere, they become at some time or other a matter of inconvenience, or often annoyance, to those who either thoughtlessly, or selfishly, or even with no other motive than good-nature, have thus elevated them.

Violet, from her great beauty and a certain clinging, affectionate manner, had always been a favourite with every one. And then she was so much to be pitied, with such a mother! so cruel to the child one moment; so coaxing and flattering the next; bringing her up in such vanity and folly, while yet she retained so wonderfully her simplicity and guilelessness. Mr and Mrs Vernon had not the heart to make a change, and order that Violet should no longer be the constant companion of their daughters, her wonderful voice making her more than ever interesting and agreeable as an associate.

And the Glenmore family, who had done so much towards spoiling the mother, now they were come to make matters worse. Violet would be more than ever *en evidence*, and the two youths, Lord Victor and Julian, both admiring the little beauty, and with anything but kindly feelings towards each other.

“Oh, it is a great blessing that Julian is going away!” was the feeling of the mother’s heart as these reflections filled her mind.

And besides all this, she saw plainly that poor little Violet, in time also, might love Julian with all the intensity of her young and grateful heart.

And then again, her darling Sylvia, did she not see that she was changed?—no longer the high-spirited, impetuous creature, whose joyful laugh was ever to be heard—whose voice, so clear and sweet in its tone, made the house ring with its cheerful music;—she had become much graver and quieter. She was certainly now no longer a child, but almost a young woman; still the change had been so sudden, that the parents missed her childish frolics, and would in their hearts have preferred the governess’s complaints of the playful *escapades* of her pupil to the opinion she now delivered, “that Mademoiselle Sylvia had become most wonderfully studious *et si sage*.” Sylvia was really a beautiful girl, and this day, for the first time, the French maid, who had been sent to London to brush up her knowledge of hair-dressing, which had lain rather dormant lately, changed the infantine manner in which

Sylvia's hair had always appeared hitherto, to the present becoming style of a young lady's *coiffure*. She wore a pretty muslin dress, with cherry-coloured bows; and, assuredly, Mrs Vernon could not have chosen a more opportune moment for whispering those few magic words into her son's ears, for Sylvia did look beautiful, and as Julian gazed at her, his mind, full of the new ideas just forced upon him, began to waver and to change.

She was not like the Sylvia of old;—those bright, restless eyes, how much softer were they now in their expression! She smiles, and very sweetly, but does not laugh as she used to do, he thinks; no, certainly, for some time he has remarked that she has been graver and quieter; but now again she does laugh at something Lady Sophia has said to her, and Julian thinks he rather likes to see those pretty pearly teeth—that mouth was formed, after all, to laugh—not to wear a solemn expression.

“I wonder whether I have been quite as affectionate to Sylvia since I returned home as I used to be,” he mused; and then some thoughts darted across his mind, which made the colour rush into his face. The remembrance of a face of exquisite beauty appeared

before him, and it was with anger against himself that he felt a discomfort, an unrest in the idea, which he knew was not as it should be.

“ I am glad I am going away,” was his concluding thought, as he rose to go to the stable, to see if his mother’s pony carriage was being made ready.

Some of the party intended to walk ; indeed, all the young party preferred so doing but Mary, who was not so strong as the others.

“ By the by,” said Lady Helena, “ we must call at the Cottage for Violet ; we promised to take her and her guitar with us. What a beautiful creature she is ! don’t you think so, Julian ? ”

“ Of course I do,” he replied.

Sylvia, who had her eyes fixed upon him, saw that the colour mounted to his face.

“ Do you see a great deal of her ? ” Lady Helena continued, addressing Sylvia.

“ Yes, we do, and we are very fond of her,” Sylvia answered, her voice sounding a little unsteady ; “ but mamma has told me lately that she fears it is not for Violet’s happiness, bringing her so completely out of her line of life ; it is, however, difficult to make any change towards

one we have known so intimately from infancy, and she is such a sweet little creature."

Julian was looking stedfastly upon Sylvia whilst she thus spoke, although she saw not the direction of his gaze. It did her no injury in his eyes, the manner she spoke of Violet.

"Yes," said Lady Sophia, "it was my sister Violet's fault in the first instance, and we have all followed her example in dressing up and pampering that pretty child. Glenmore always preached against it. I fear the mischief is done, and cannot be remedied. What would Nurse Rose say, if we were to present her with brown stuff and cotton frocks for her beautiful daughter, instead of our cast-off silks and finery? I quite agree that we have made a mistake, but it cannot be helped now."

They had reached the Cottage, from which Violet issued, radiant with smiles, looking fresh and lovely as the rose—her truest emblem.

Nothing could exceed the simple elegance of her dress. She had evidently just escaped from the hands of her mother, who accompanied her to the gate.

"Well, you will take care of my darling treasure, dear ladies, I am sure. Oh, Miss Vernon, how well you are looking, a great im-

provement, indeed, your change of hair dressing ! Mamselle has learnt something, I see, by going to London ; I must coax her to give me a few lessons."

" Oh, how I do dislike that woman ! " said Sylvia to Lady Helena, as they walked on, Violet in advance.


" Oh, fie, don't abuse dear Nurse."

" Well, Helena, I beg your pardon, but I *cannot* like her."

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT a glorious summer evening it was ! all nature rejoicing in the tranquil air, so soft, yet so refreshing, which wafted its fragrant breath around, laden with the scent of blossoms and shrubs, which were flowering in such profusion round the sylvan reception-room.

The young people were glad to rest themselves on the mossy turf ; the ascent through the wood was fatiguing, and the day had been sultry. They formed a very picturesque group as they thus appeared, their large hats removed, their youthful faces and graceful forms unrestrained by formality, all taking, unconsciously, those unstudied attitudes no art can command ;



the large dog, reposing at his mistress's feet, adding to the effect of the scene.

Lady Glenmore and Mr and Mrs Vernon sat on rustic seats, looking with much pleasure and admiration on the pleasant sight before them.

“ How delicious this is, so calm and peaceful ! ” Lady Glenmore exclaimed ; “ I never see anything so beautiful as this spot ; and it brings me back to years gone by, when I was young, free from care, and one with me who would gladly have averted a feather's weight of trouble from resting upon me ; ” and Lady Glenmore's eyes filled with tears. “ Yes,” she continued, “ how little we estimate present blessings, especially those which are generally the portion of our early married years ; when with a kind husband by one's side, our children at that happy, careless age wanting only those pleasant cares which to a mother it is so sweet to bestow, we ought only to have poured out the song of thankfulness. Yes, I often tell my Violet when she comes to me with her trifling griefs and annoyances, ‘ My child, these are your halcyon days ; your largest sorrow now will appear but a speck in the horizon to

the real sorrows which it is the fate of every mortal to encounter, and which will arrive in due time.' Indeed, dear friends, I have much to say to you on the subject of my present troubles. Dear Victor, he is such an anxious care to me, and I know not what to do for the best. I have written to implore Glenmore to return to England, for I really cannot encounter the responsibility unaided."

As she thus spoke the odour of a cigar became plainly perceptible, and Lion, whose quick ear had detected the sound of footsteps, started up and rushed towards the spot from whence it proceeded.

In another moment Lord Victor's voice was heard in harsh and angry tones, saying :

"Down, you brute, or I shall knock you on the head."

"Lion, Lion, come back this instant!" cried Sylvia, who was on her feet in an instant, her eyes flashing, her cheeks crimsoning.

Lion instantly obeyed his mistress's command, and bounded back to her side, looking, however, not well pleased, for he was perfectly acquainted with the habits and heavy horse-whip of the young lord, who now emerged

from amongst the trees, followed by a dapper little man, whom we recognise as the Reverend Edwin Fanshaw.

The youth, who looked flushed and heated—probably from wine—scanned the company with a careless, supercilious glance, shook hands with Mr and Mrs Vernon ungraciously, and then swaggered, with his hands in his pockets, towards the young people.

Julian came forward at once and held out his hand, which was scarcely touched by Lord Victor, who approached Sylvia, staring at her with his usual ill-breeding.

“Well, Sylvia,” he said, “you haven’t taught your dog better manners; he had better take care what he is about, when I have my stick in my hand with lead at the top!”

Sylvia’s blood was boiling over, and she was on the point of answering him as he deserved, when chancing to look at Julian’s face, she saw an expression upon it which at once told her that there must be no recrimination which might bring forth more insulting words from the ill-conditioned youth; so, with an effort over herself, great, indeed, to one with her excitable nature, she checked her incensed feelings, and endeavouring to smile, said calmly :

"I feel sure you would not hurt him, Lord Victor; and you know he never does any harm; his bark is worse than his bite."

Victor, who had expected to be paid off in his own coin, well knowing how small a spark it required to kindle a blaze in the excitable mind of Sylvia, whom he had quarrelled with ever since he could remember, was quite thrown back by her present demeanour. Her quiet lady-like manner and gentle speech at once acted as a spell, and whilst he continued to stare at her, he was thinking, "What a devilish handsome creature she has become!"

"Well, Mr Lion," he said, more courteously, "for your mistress's sake I'll spare you; but, Sylvia, what have you been doing with yourself?—you have grown amazingly handsome; nothing like Brooklands for bringing forth beauties. Where's my pretty Violet hiding herself?" and he turned to the girl, who had in part concealed herself behind one of the Lady Lyles.

Sylvia's heart beat indignantly. That odious boy, for so she still considered him, presuming to pay her those coarse compliments! She longed to give vent to her irritated feelings, and tell him how she despised him; but she looked

at Julian, who was talking to Mr Fanshaw, and fancied the glance of his eye, and the expression of his countenance, marked approval of her conduct, so she was determined to bear all—everything, so that peace might be preserved between those two hostile parties.

The servants now began to prepare the table for tea, which was supplied from the Cottage kitchen.

“Come and sit by me, little beauty,” Victor said to Violet, who still kept very close to Lady Sophia, “‘and eat sweet strawberries, sugar, and cream.’ I remember your mother singing something about that, and ‘curly locks, curly locks, wilt thou be mine?’ So now come along, and *be mine*, or rather my neighbour at the tea-table, ‘and eat sweet strawberries, sugar, and cream’ with me this evening.” So saying, he took her hand and dragged her to the table, and during the repast entirely devoted himself to her, taking no notice of any one else, scarcely deigning to answer any remark his mother addressed to him—Violet seeming anything but happy or flattered by these assiduities, becoming very much flushed, and scarcely raising her eyes, except to cast furtive glances occasionally around her.

Mr Fanshaw became immediately at home, endeavouring to make himself agreeable to the young ladies, and assiduous in his polite attentions to Lady Glenmore and Mrs Vernon. His presence was rather a relief than otherwise, for he was a well-bred man, and had much small talk at his command.

Of his pupil he took little heed ; this was not the hour to assume the tutor ; he threw off that character at twelve o'clock each day, too happy to forget, if possible, that he was obliged to enact that *rôle* at any season.

He was rapturous in his admiration of the rustic drawing-room and splendid view beyond, which certainly never appeared to more advantage than on this calm summer's evening, the bright sunset illumining the horizon, and casting a rose-coloured light on every object.

" A Paradise, indeed ! " he exclaimed sentimentally, addressing himself to Mrs Vernon, after having duly discussed the iced strawberries and their attendant delicacies. " After the glare and heat of London, the beauty, freshness, and tranquillity of this favoured spot, strikes, probably, upon my senses more vividly than on those of persons living constantly under its charms, everything around is so lovely and in character.

What a perfect little Hebe that is to whose charms Lord Victor is always doing such homage, and that stately young beauty!" looking towards Sylvia.

"My daughter," Mrs Vernon interrupted, rather stiffly.

"Oh, I beg pardon," Mr Fanshaw added apologetically; and then continued in a soft tone, which savoured not a little of a straining after effect, "here one might imagine nothing could exist but happiness and peace, that no feelings, save those of purity and love, could possibly find place in the hearts of those congregated in a spot so preëminently favoured both by art, nature, and its genial air, the—"

But Mrs Vernon at this part of the harangue fell into so deep a reverie that she heard no more, was only aware, perhaps, of a gentle murmuring which lasted for some time longer, for she was looking abstractedly at the countenances of those assembled round that luxurious tea-table, laden with every delicacy which the refinement of our luxurious age could invent. The surrounding scene was certainly exquisitely lovely, and health, beauty, and prosperity, were truly the characteristics of the young group before her. But even into the

garden of Eden the serpent insinuated its baneful way, and its trail is still to be found in the fairest spots, in the most sequestered and peaceful retreats. The curse rests still upon every child of Eve.

That splendid-looking creature, Victor Lyle, how fearful the expression of his countenance!—so young, and yet with vice so prematurely developed in the very lines of that finely-formed but proudly-sarcastic mouth, something so repellent to the feelings!—and Mrs Vernon's heart recoiled when she saw him leaning with so rude a stare of his brilliant eyes over poor little Violet, who, she perceived, was shrinking and trembling like a frightened bird about to be pounced upon by some murderous hawk. And then her own dear children, her Julian! There was no peace or pleasure beaming from that usually benevolent countenance. Its expression was flushed and anxious. Whilst he endeavoured to exert himself as usual, and to be attentive and agreeable to all around, his mother detected ever and anon a spark flashing from his eyes, as he looked towards Lord Victor—denoting a look of intense impatience and disgust—which he had the greatest difficulty to restrain from breaking forth into

words and actions. And Sylvia, where was her bright smile and musical laugh, her restless spirits the first to suggest fun and adventurous frolic, the first to be called to order for her child-like exuberant glee? She seemed to have changed at once into an anxious woman, her eyes constantly seeking Julian, her whole care and attention concentrated on him.

She saw at once that he was annoyed, however imperfectly guessing the real state of his mind, and was aware how antagonistic the feelings of the two youths were towards each other. She must avert anything like collision, keep that odious Victor in good humour, if possible, so she busied herself in endeavouring to amuse the party—proposed to sing one of the trios in which Violet took the *soprano* part.

And beautifully the three young voices blended. Both Mary and Sylvia sang well; their German governess was a first-rate musician, and they, too, had profited by the itinerant Italian's instructions, and learnt to play on the guitar, upon which Violet now was made to perform, warbling also to its accompaniment some of her sweetest songs.

Lady Glenmore and her daughters were delighted, and the raptures of the enthusiastic Mr Fanshaw unbounded.

“Yes, did you ever hear or see anything like her?” asked Lord Victor of his tutor; “is she not a perfect love?”

“Indeed she is; may I ask who the young lady may be?”

“What the devil does that signify?” was the reply, and he turned rudely on his heels. And Julian, where was he? He leant against a tree, his countenance grave and thoughtful, his eyes, too, often lifted upon the fair songstress; and his mother thought, as she looked upon him, “I never imagined that the time would come when I should rejoice that my boy was so soon to leave me.”

There was indeed much for both mothers to ponder on this evening.

Lady Glenmore, for the first time, looked upon the poor little girl they had helped to drag out of her sphere, as one who might become but too dangerous from her singular attractions. She saw Victor’s undisguised looks of admiration, his never-ceasing assiduities, and they were displeasing to the mother’s eyes. When the party broke up, it

was on his arm Violet was made to lean, Lord Victor dragging her off in advance of the rest of the party, and when the others passed the Cottage they saw that he was still there, and heard again the sound of poor Violet's guitar.

He had made her sing again, that young tyrant!—and she was powerless to resist the orders of her mother. Tired and weary, she had to sit up whilst the young lord partook of a dainty little supper prepared by Mrs Miller, who well knew all the favourite dishes of her “darling boy,” as she continued to call him. When poor Violet was permitted at last to retire to her bed, bitter were the tears which bedewed her pillow; she had been so harassed and bewildered by the unwelcome attentions of Victor Lyle.

“And Mr Julian, not one word did he speak to me!” This idea was the crowning distress of all.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY GLENMORE returned home with her heart very ill at ease. She felt terrified lest, after all, her bringing Victor to Lyle Court would not answer. Where, indeed, could he be out of temptation? But what was she to do?

The poor lady passed a sleepless night, sadly perplexed; but with the post-bag came some comfort.

Lord Glenmore wrote to tell his mother to despatch Lord Victor and his tutor immediately to a town he indicated in Italy, where he would await them, and then proceed for a more lengthened tour. He thought it would

be better for his brother to be under his own *surveillance*, and was desirous of sparing Lady Glenmore so difficult a charge. Lord Glenmore desired that Lord Victor and Mr Fanshaw should start at once for London, and set off for Italy as soon as passports, etc., had been procured.

This plan was indeed a relief to the mother's mind. She always felt that Victor was safe when in his brother's hands; she could now look forward with more hope to the future, and had no idea but that the plan would be hailed with pleasure by her young son.

But this was far from being the case: the youth was furious; he resolutely declared he would not go. He was very well where he was, and did not choose to go and be bullied by Glenmore, and watched as if he were a baby in leading-strings. Lady Glenmore was in despair, and his sisters aghast. They had been delighted at the idea of getting rid of their troublesome brother, who was a constant annoyance to themselves and their mother. Go he must, and after much trouble and altercation, Mr Vernon being sent for to assist in settling the point, Victor, chafing and fuming, abusing his brother and every one else, was

obliged to consent to depart two days after. They were to take with them a foreign valet; Lord Glenmore particularly desired this, and not Tom Jones.

No abuse did Lord Victor spare to hurl against his kind brother, who thus burthened himself to become bear-leader to the most ungracious and unsatisfactory of youths.

Mr Fanshaw did not either at all approve of the change. He thought he should be extremely comfortable at Lyle Court. The *cuisine* was first-rate, the young ladies most agreeable, little or nothing had he had to do; but under the eye of the grave and rather learned Marquis he would be obliged to exert himself; and he did not at all relish travelling, even in the best of styles. He groaned in spirit when he looked round and noted the elegance and beauty of everything, and thought of the pleasant, tranquil, idle summer he had intended to spend—a summer holiday indeed he felt his situation under such circumstances would have been; and he rather won his pupil's heart, by entering fully into his feelings upon the subject; and his ally and confidant, Tom Jones, grumbled dolefully.

“So I am not to go with you, my Lord!” he

said sulkily. "What's all this about? I thought I was always to be about your person; so my Lady said."

"Yes, but neither my Lady nor any one else, it seems, has any voice in the matter, but that meddlesome brute, Glenmore! and to think that I am wholly in his power till I am of age. Oh, that the time were come, and that I could snap my fingers in his face—a formal prig, an odious busybody! I hate going, and feel almost determined to say that I will not stir—only I suppose it would end in my being obliged to do so, my mother makes such a fuss. I'm as down in the mouth as possible; and to leave that pretty Violet! Do you know, Tom, I'm more than ever head and ears over in love with her."

"Are you, my Lord? what will Frank Miller say?"

"Say!—why what should he say?"

"Why, you see, he's mighty particular about his beautiful daughter. I hears a good deal through my sweetheart at the Court, who gossips with Mrs Miller's maid, who has good ears of her own, and makes good use of them; and pretty rows there often are, but the missus always gets the best of it. How queer

it is : Frank Miller, the boldest and strongest man going, who rules all in these stables with a rod of iron—even the most rumpageous of horses, why he's soon made as meek as a mouse by that scolding woman ; but about his daughter he'd stand no nonsense, I'm quite certain sure."

" Well, why should he ? he ought to be only too proud ; for to tell you the truth, Tom—I know you can keep a secret—as sure as that I stand here, I shall marry that girl. Oh, you may grin and look as if you did not believe me,—but I have always determined upon that ; long, long ago, when I was quite a child, I had made up my mind, and see if I shall not keep to it."

" Lawk-a-deary me ! and won't that be a pretty kettle of fish ? I should like to know what the Marquis would say, and my Lady, and all the grand folk, your relations."

" And what care I for them ? I hate grand folks ; I think them a stupid, stiff set, with their airs and graces ; I was never intended for the aristocracy ; I am much more at my ease out of their society ; and the girls of what are called the higher classes are such formal misses—mustn't do this or that, no fun about

them. I only hope my pretty Violet won't be spoilt amongst them, and made into a fine lady. I don't think she's quite as jolly and free as she used to be."

"Well, the rectory people do their best to spoil her, I believe," answered Tom; "at least they teach her, and take great notice of her; and, in course, she'll imitate their ways. Mr Julian, I suppose, tells her what is genteel—"

"I'll tell you what, Tom," interrupted Victor, foaming with rage, "I beg you will keep an eye on that Hope; and if you don't tell me exactly how he goes on with Violet, I'll just send you at once to the dogs; I'll have nothing more to say to you."

"Oh, I'll look sharp, my Lord, depend on me," said Tom, suppressing a broad grin at the expense of the young lord, whose present ebullition he only regarded as one of the childish fancies for which he had always been famous.

Even this low-minded groom thought the idea of his young lord marrying the blacksmith's daughter, just as likely, as that he himself should think of wedding one of the Ladies Lyle; it amused this vulgar friend to make the youth "flare up" about his love, but as for anything more serious than a boy's folly, that

never entered his calculations. He hated Julian, and had the same savage pleasure in setting the two youths at loggerheads, as he would have felt in witnessing a fight between the young ladies' two pet Scotch terriers.

"Will you swear, Tom, that you'll write and tell me all that happens here—that you'll watch Violet?"

"Yes, my Lord, as a cat would watch a mouse; 'sharp' will be my word. I'll call and ask Mrs Miller now and then whether she has heard from you, and then I shall have a look at pretty Violet. Lawk! that is a dainty sight, which makes my mouth water; you need not look so glum, my Lord, 'a cat may look at a king,' you know—and all that I can ever do is to look—she'll never look in return, that you may be sure; she who is so accustomed to better things!"

Victor talked with his confidant some time longer, and then walked towards the Cottage; and when his back was turned, Tom was able to indulge freely in the mirth which his young lord had excited in him.

"That is a queer young chap, surely, and always has been, but I dare say he'll be changed when he comes from foreign parts."

CHAPTER XXIX.

JULIAN had spent anything but a happy evening, his mind was filled with strange, new, and counteracting ideas. The more he pondered over his mother's words, the more he became aware of their significance. He had looked upon Sylvia in quite a new light, and certainly never had he seen her under such favourable auspices. Her conduct towards Lord Victor had been perfect, so different from that which he would have expected from her impulsive self; so dignified and lady-like, so self-possessed, none of the usual bursts of indignant feeling, which had been ever wont to ignite at the least approach of provocation,

she seemed, in fact, as if by some spell of magic, changed !

And even her looks, she was not like the Sylvia of old, so woman-like now in her appearance, and really for the first time in her life he thought so "very handsome."

But, again he thought, and sighed. "What a beauty is that poor little Violet !" and then his brow contracted, and an expression clouded his brow, very different from that which it usually wore.

"I could not bear," he then continued to muse, "to see that unprincipled Lyle behave as he did to her last night ; it was with the greatest difficulty I restrained myself from taking her away from him, she looked so miserable. I know him well, and young as he is, the account I heard of him from an Eton fellow is dreadful. I really think I must speak to Frank Miller about it ; as for the mother, I fear she only encourages Lyle." This was the substance of the thoughts which gave Julian a most unusually restless night, and Mr and Mrs Vernon were also not without their anxious moments, and much and anxiously did they talk over the events of the previous evening.

The next morning's breakfast was not so

cheerful a one as usual. Mary alone spoke freely of the last night's party; the rest had each a thoughtful look upon their countenances.

"Mamma," said Mary, "I think Victor Lyle is more disagreeable than ever; how he tormented poor Violet! I don't think she liked it at all. Why did you not help her, Julian? I saw her so often looking at you, as if she wanted you to say or do something that would keep that tiresome boy in order."

Julian turned very red, and then said with flashing eyes:

"I should have liked very much to have punished him as he deserves, I can assure you, Mary; and perhaps if Lady Glenmore and his sisters had not been there, I might not have been able to resist."

"What, Julian, would not the presence of your own mother and sisters have restrained you?" said Mr Vernon.

"Oh, of course—but, my dear father, I am sure you quite understand what I mean; and I am confident you felt equally disgusted—though in a different spirit, I am aware—with Victor Lyle's conduct towards that defenceless girl."

“And I quite agree with Julian,” exclaimed Sylvia, with great *empressement*. “I just felt the same. I could not enjoy anything. I was so full of indignation and disgust towards Victor, that I had to control myself, I can assure you, mamma, from going up to Violet and telling her to come and sit between me and Lady Helena ; it was quite shocking to see that dreadful countenance.”

Mrs Vernon only said, “I am rejoiced that you took no part in the business, Sylvia,” and then changed a subject she shuddered to hear discussed in the presence of Sylvia and Mary, much more that they should mix themselves up in its details ; and soon a note was delivered to the Rector from Lady Sophia, requesting that he would come to the Court as soon as possible, to talk over some important business with Lady Glenmore. Mrs Vernon then asked Julian if he would ride over to Ashton Park with a note of invitation to the family there, requesting that he would go early, as she wished for an answer.

On passing the Cottage gate, Julian stopped his horse, as usual, to say a few passing words to Violet, who was always either flitting about the garden, or ready to fly out at the sound of

his voice. To-day the Cottage door was closed,—a very unusual circumstance—and no one visible.

He waited some moments, and then called “Violet!” and after a little more delay Mrs Miller appeared, shutting the door after her, and trying to put on her usual simper, but looking evidently ruffled and confused.

“Good morning, Mr Julian,” she said, “you are taking an early ride.”

“Yes; I shall pass through A., can I do anything for you?”

“No thank you, sir, Frank will be coming from thence to-day; he has been there on business ever since Monday.”

“He is a very busy man now-a-days I think, Mrs Miller; but where is Violet? I called to ask if she was tired after her exertions yesterday.”

“Why, I really think she is, but I sent her out to take a little walk, I thought it would do her good.”

“Which way did she go?” inquired Julian.

“Well, I don’t know; perhaps she went down to the village, or somewhere in that direction.”

“Oh! well, perhaps I shall meet her.”

"Good morning, Mrs Miller," and he trotted off.

"You'll be precious clever if you do," muttered the woman, and she returned into the house.

Violet was in her own little room. Her quick ear had immediately caught the sound of Julian's horse's feet, and then his clear voice pronouncing her name. She sprang to the door, but her progress was impeded.

"I'll have none of this!" Mrs Miller exclaimed, grasping the girl by the arm, and dragging her back, "standing at the gate by young gentlemen's horses is very improper conduct; go to your room this moment; a pretty piece of work there would be if Lord Victor came up at the same moment. I couldn't answer for the consequences; they'll quarrel as sure as I'm alive; I shall go and say to Mr Julian that you are out."

"Oh, Mimmie, Mimmie, don't, pray don't, just let me go to-day, this once, pray do."

"I'll do no such thing; now go up-stairs this moment, or you had better take care." With a menacing look, and pushing the girl towards the stairs, she forced her to ascend them, and following her closely, made all sure

by locking Violet into her own little apartment, and then she proceeded to meet Julian with this deliberate lie on her tongue.

The fact was, Victor Lyle had inveighed in no measured terms against Julian to Mrs Miller the evening before, vowing eternal hatred to him, and complaining bitterly of his having superseded him in Violet's affections. "I know this to be a fact," the youth exclaimed, "she is not the girl she was; I am certain she cares for that fellow."

In vain Mrs Miller tried to persuade him to the contrary, and with honied words endeavoured to destroy the idea.

"No, I have seen her, and that is quite sufficient; and he, do I not know what he is about?"

And the hopeful young lord worked himself into a paroxysm of rage that alarmed the woman. By dint of a private word of stern import, Violet had been frightened into behaving tolerably the evening before, and Victor had left the Cottage in good humour, promising to be there again early the next morning. What if he should arrive whilst Julian was at the gate, Violet by his side?

Mrs Miller found it was no sinecure having a "beautiful daughter."

"Those boys will drive me mad," she said, as she returned to the house. "I wish Lord Victor was a little older, and I should make short work of that business, but Frank will be soon at home, and we must mind our Ps and Qs. I'm glad Mr Julian will soon be off,—I shall be rid of one trouble at least. And now I must get this plaguy girl right again. But, goodness gracious, here he comes full tilt, like a whirlwind ; he looks in a precious temper."

"Well, Mrs Miller, so that fellow has been here again !"

"He only stopped a moment with a message from Mrs Vernon to me."

"Where's Violet ?"

"Oh ! poor child, she's not at all well, she caught cold last night, I think ; she is lying down. I was quite alarmed, her eyes looked so red and heavy."

"Oh ! then, she did not see him ?"

"See him ! why bless you, she's hardly fit to see any one, she is so poorly ; but I dare say if you call in the afternoon she will be much better ; I gave her a little hot wine and water, which is sure to do her good."

Victor sat in moody abstraction. "Well, Rose, I'm in a pretty scrape," he at length said.

“What is it, my dear?” she inquired, alarmed.

“That precious brother of mine has sent for me to join him without an hour’s delay at Naples, and I’m to be off to-morrow.”

“To-morrow! and what shall we do? how miserable we shall be!” and ejaculation after ejaculation of dismay and distress were duly intoned by Mrs Miller, ending by her pocket-handkerchief being applied to her eyes, to wipe away her well-enacted tears.

Victor looked very much inclined to follow her example, and give way to a hearty cry upon her compassionate bosom, as in days of yore, when he came to her for refuge and assistance under any youthful calamity; and, really if there was a person he cared for in the world but himself, it was his *ci-devant* nurse, who had always possessed the art, or rather tact, of managing the boy when every one else totally failed.

“Well, my darling, never mind,” she said at last, in very pathetic tones, “it is for the best after all; the time will soon pass away, and a few months will make you quite a man, and then no one will presume, or have any right, to control your will, whatever that may be.”

"But I intended to be so happy here; and Violet, how shall I live without seeing her? I tell you what, Rose, why should I not marry her now—at once?"

"Why, my dear boy, you are both so young, oh, it would never do!"

"There, now *you* are against me!—I tell you what, I shall just go and drown or shoot myself, for I am the most miserable of human beings." And he walked about the small apartment gesticulating and vowing vengeance against every one.

Mrs Miller acted her part well; she knew the ways of her patient perfectly, and administered accordingly. She was quite aware that the spoilt child's ebullition would soon pass away, and she was not sparing of the cordials, hope and flattery, to soothe his ruffled feelings. "And Violet," she added, "won't she be as beautiful again in a year's time?—I shall keep her in cotton for you, my Lord; but perhaps by that time you will have forgotten the poor little beauty."

"Forgotten her! that's not very likely;—have I ever had her out of my head from the time I could tell what was beautiful?"

“ But, my dear Lord, you must remember that it will not be all plain sailing; I fear there will be many a cross in your true love. What would the Marquis say, and my Lady, to your marrying my daughter?—and Frank, why he’d be as much against it as any one.”

“ You will drive me mad, Rose, if you go on talking in that manner. I care not for mothers, fathers, or brothers, I have told you a thousand times; marry that girl I *will*, come what may; by fair means or foul, she shall be my wife. Do you think I shall ask any one’s leave? I hope I know a little better the ways of the world than that.”

“ Well, my dear, you must keep all this snug, for if Frank gets an inkling of it, I believe he’d marry her off at once to one of the ‘ worthy, honest ’ men he talks about.”

“ Oh, never fear me; I never make a confidant; I don’t trust any one on earth but you, Rose; and now, mind you keep that fellow Hope from ever presuming to touch even the hem of her garment. It is fortunate we did not meet this morning; I feel in such a state of irritation, what with one thing and the other, that if I had caught him at the gate, and

she had been there too, I cannot answer for what I might have done. Well, as I cannot see my beauty this morning, I will come again after luncheon,—I have loads to do and to settle in the stables about my poor horses with Tom.”

* * * * *

Mrs Miller felt in no small degree relieved.

“Thank gracious goodness *he* is going too! I am not at all ready for the business! the longer it is put off the better, the nearer to his being of age; and, upon my word, if he had staid here he would never have waited, such a self-willed impetuous creature as he is; it will be a pretty job whenever it does happen, enough to make the top of one’s head fly off, to think of it, but when once over, what a thing it will be for Violet! ‘Lady Victor Lyle!’ and, if the Marquis does not marry, ‘The Marchioness of Glenmore!’ quite worth all I shall have to go through. And to think that the worst person of all to manage will be her own father! Won’t he stand in the way of his own child, with his grovelling, vulgar, old-fashioned ideas of right and wrong? and that girl, she’ll be another hindrance. However, I’ll conquer *her*, and

that's the main point. But I must go and look after my captive beauty. Oh, dear, it is a relief to think that this boy is going to-morrow, and the other next week. I shall have breathing time, at least."

CHAPTER XXX.

VICTOR took his departure the next day. The youth was really most selfishly wretched at having to relinquish everything which to him constituted enjoyment, for what he deemed a penance and a bore. Travelling, seeing new countries, fine scenery, what cared he for such plagues? and then to be under coercion, to have that “fellow Glenmore,” more like another tutor than a companion—for how could he enter into his dull scientific pursuits!—always at his heels, dogging his steps; and then what he should leave behind! It was really pitiable to behold the crest-fallen state of the proud youth.

His mother was miserable ; and now the time had come that she must part with him, her indulgent nature made her forget all the pain and trouble he was hourly giving her, and she would fain have kept him with her.

But Glenmore's orders were not to be disobeyed. As the carriage passed the Cottage door he stopped it, and springing out, rushed into the house.

" Violet ! " he exclaimed, clasping her in his arms, whilst *bona fide* tears rained from his eyes, " when I come back will you love me,—will you be my wife ? "

The girl was very pale, her weak young heart was softened at the sight of his real distress. What could she say seeing the proud, hard Victor thus humbled to tears ? tears, too, shed for her. No tears ever did their work more effectually, for they won for Victor at least a sentiment of transient pity in her breast, and we all know how softening is that emotion. And then he was going—going for a long time, so she would not struggle from his warm embrace, as she certainly must have done at any other time. She would constrain herself to be passive, and then the relief of

thinking that in a few moments he would be gone, not to return for at least a year!—her mood was therefore unusually compliant.

“But answer me, Violet, send me away at least with comfort at my heart. Do you love me? Will you be my wife?”

“Of course, I ought to love you, Lord Victor; how kind you have always been to me!” was the evasive answer.

A servant knocked at the door.

“If you please, my Lord, Mr Fanshaw says you’ll be late for the train.”

“Violet, will you be my wife when I return? I’ll not stir till you tell me.”

“Yes, yes,” she cried, impatiently; any thing better than that he should stay.

Again he pressed her passionately to his heart, and then—the picture of grief which he cared not to conceal—he rushed into the carriage. And Violet, her nerves quite unstrung by the harrassing troubles of the last days, and now excited and overcome by the parting interview, flew to her little room, and throwing herself upon her bed, and burying her face in the pillow, wept unrestrainedly; but they were tears partaking of relief not of sorrow.

Mrs Vernon, acting upon the principle that

“A little fire is quickly trodden out ;
Which, being suffer'd, rivers cannot quench,”

spoke a few words to her son that evening. They were but few, they were quite enough. His mother's words and wishes had been always sacred to Julian. She now spoke to him as a friend, as well as a mother, love and confidence glowing in every syllable she uttered. But she was firm and decided. Julian, deeply distressed, at first listened to her with averted countenance, but turned at last his clear open face upon her, and eyes from which truth and honour seemed actually to emanate.

How that look rejoiced his mother's heart, and how fervently she afterwards thanked God upon her knees, for this blessing of blessings comprised in such a son !

“Mother, you need say no more. I see it all, and agree in every word you have said,” he murmured hurriedly, and then embracing her with the most affectionate warmth, and receiving from his beloved mother the most tender and fervent return to these caresses,

Julian left her, and Mrs Vernon felt a load lifted from her heart. All anxiety on that account being over, Mrs Vernon considered it would be an expedient moment to endeavour gently and gradually to break off, or rather to alter, the character of the intimacy subsisting between her daughters and Violet; and the family at the Court, having seen with dismay the threatening evil consequences of this false position of the nurse's daughter, quite entered into all Mrs Vernon's opinions upon the subject.

But the mischief had been done. How difficult to repair the damage which had commenced from the hour of the poor girl's birth! Violet was quite spoilt for any other society than that in which she had hitherto mixed—for any other life but that of refinement. When she came to the Rectory for her music lesson, which the German governess for her own gratification continued to give her, she was not so often asked to remain. In the riding or walking excursions she was now seldom included. She began to perceive the difference, and it smote her to the heart. All was done in the kindest and most con-

siderate manner possible ; but she who had tasted of the cup of life so sweetened, how could she turn to the common routine of the existence which one in her grade must lead, and without a pursuit but music and fancy-work ?

Mrs Miller soon began to perceive how matters stood, and at first it was a sharp pang to her pride and self esteem.

“However, after all it could not be well helped, and it does not much signify !” were next her cogitations. “I have him secure, I am pretty well certain ; and being put down by those stuck-up Rectory people will bring Violet to her senses. I know how it is, just as well as if I heard them say it ; they see that their Julian is in love with my beauty, and I believe they have an inkling at the Court of how matters stand with that dear boy, Victor. No wonder, poor fellow, when the tears were running down his face when he left the Cottage, and the servants all staring at him. When he comes back I shall have no further trouble with my young lady ; she’ll be too glad to take her good fortune, when it is offered ; and it is much better that she should

not have absurd things put into her head at the Rectory—Mrs Vernon talking good to her about duties and religion—all very well in their way, but quite unnecessary to be stuffed into Violet's head at her time of life; she, too, who thinks all they say gospel, they'd soon make her as prim as an old maid; she is always quite different after a lecture from the rector's lady."

Mrs Miller was full of thought as she sat at work in her parlour window. She had much to ponder upon.

"This picture of Violet, which that dear boy says he must have, and which he will pay any price for—how is it to be ever done? I think I must contrive to get up to London somehow or other, perhaps ask my Lady to let me go to Whitehall Gardens for a week or two, and take Violet with me. I can humbug Frank, by saying the girl wants a little change, and really so she does, the poor thing looks so pale and sad. Oh, won't I like to spite them all some of these days! And my Lady, forsooth, even she is rather cool and odd, but I'll warrant when the deed is done, and can't be undone, she'll soon relent: and if she doesn't

who cares? He is independent of them all; that fine property, Cranley Abbey, his own when he comes of age—the Marquis, too, thinking more of books and studies than of ever taking a wife”—

“The Marchioness of Glenmore!”

“That is what I want to live to see my beautiful daughter.”

END OF VOL. I.

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